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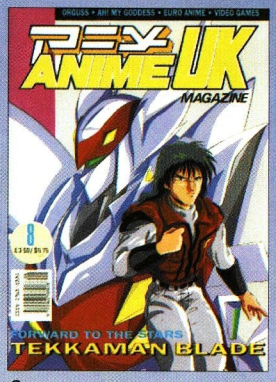

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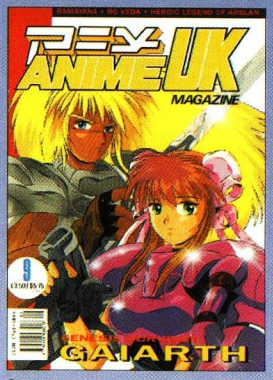

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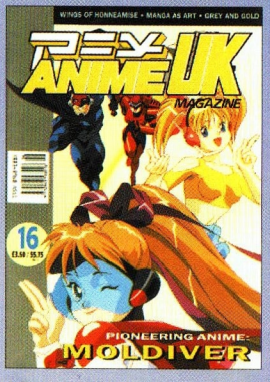

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TEAM AFX - ALL READY FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON!

Helen McCarthy, Editor, our Christmas Angel - good as gold
Peter Goll, Production, our Christmas Spirit - rich and mellow
Steve Kyte, Art Director, our Christmas Cake - tasty & full of good things
Jonathan Clements, Translator, our Christmas Tree - tall and splendidly decorated
Peter Evans, Away Team AFX, our Christmas Present - sentfrom afar and always welcome
Masaaki Kato, Away Team AFX, our Christmas Message - full of goodwill to all!

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Published by ASHDOWN PUBLISHING, Avalon Court, Star Road, Partridge Green, West Sussex RH13 8RY

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Please enclose SASE if reply is required

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U.S. readers contact Julie on Fax: (513) 353 3933, or write to: Heritage Press, 3150 State Line Road, North Bend, Ohio 45052

Internet address: http://www.pavilion.co.uk/ashdown
Email address: 100041.135@compuserve.com

This is the Chinese character 'wan', meaning 'ending'; the Japanese reading is 'kan', and when you see it, it means you've reached the end of an article or instalment!

OTAKU VOCABULARY

You'll find some Japanese terms crop up again and again. Here are a few definitions:

ANIME	Japanese animation
CHARA	Character
KAWAII	Cute
MANGA	Japanese Comics
MECHA	Mechanical object, ie robot, vehicle, weapon, etc.
OTAKU	Anime fanboy/girl
OVA/OAV	Original Video Animation, anime made for video
SEIYUU	Anime voice actor

KONNICHIWA!

It's that time of year again! This will be our last issue before Christmas, although issue 10 will be out during the holiday season, just before 1996 gets under way. It's time to think about fun, festivities, parties and seeing family and friends.

This has been another hectic year for us, with our move to Ashdown Publishing, our new computer systems and our first tottering steps on the information superhighway. It's been a busy year for anime and manga in the West, with the market outside Japan expanding and the established tradition of Western co-production which has served TV series so well extending into the movie world. It's been an exciting year for the anime and manga industry in Japan too, with many wonderful movies, OAVs and series making their first appearance.

In the big wide world outside our own little interests, the picture has been full of contrasts. On the one hand we've seen terrible events like the gas attacks on the Tokyo subway, the many war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and in Africa, and more natural disasters. Yet there have also been hopeful and joyful developments - the ceasefire in Bosnia, the peace in Ireland, the fragile accord between Palestinians and Israelis, all seem to be holding. Let's all hope.

My wish for the holiday season and the New Year is that everyone in the world will enjoy a peaceful, happy time with their family and friends, and that for the next twelve months none of us will have to face anything more threatening than video censorship or bad dubbing, more damaging than a bad review of our favourite title, more terrifying than a few dabs of paint on a cel representing an imaginary monster. Peace, everywhere, everyone, always.

Yours animatedly,

Helen McCarthy
Editor

Right: Ultra Ne-Chan
Front Cover: Fairy Princess Reine © KSS, Picture courtesy of KSS with assistance from Sakura Studio
Special thanks to Gary marshall for designing the SICAF '95 spread.

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ATTENTION READERS EVERYWHERE!

Many of you have written to us asking us to send birthday greetings or special messages, advertise swaps or carry your personal wants lists. We couldn't - but now you can! For just 30p per word (minimum 10 words) your message or request can appear in AFX CLASSIFIED and reach fans all over the world! And fanclubs, zines and conventions can use this service too! All classified ads must be prepaid (by credit card or cheque/PO in UK funds only) and if paying by credit card you can place your ad by phone. To find out how, call Barry or Janet on 01403 711511 in Europe, or call Julie on 513 353 4052 for American rates and bookings.

EUROPE

NEW DUTCH ZINE

KATSURA is a new anime and manga magazine in Dutch. Produced by a team which includes those brilliant guys from J.A.M.M., one of the best fanzines around, KATSURA aims to bring the best in anime and manga news, reviews and features to otaku in the Netherlands and Belgium. Issue 0 includes material on Osamu Tezuka, Studio CLAMP, MACROSS PLUS and anime merchandise. For more details or subscription information write to NV Mana, Bissengemsestraat 54, 8501 Kortrijk-Heule, Belgium, tel/fax (0)56 22 13 12. The same company has also launched a translated manga line with Masamune Shirow's APPLESEED and CLAMP's RG VEDA.

SLAM ME KANGAROO DOWN MON BRAVE

That excellent French fanzine ANIMELAND reports that the French TV screening of the hugely popular basketball series SLAM DUNK may be delayed so that an all-French-produced basketball series starring five kangaroos, KANGOO, can be shown instead. Apparently AB Production, which made KANGOO with Eustache Production and then bought SLAM DUNK, feels that the two series can't be screened at the same time. At the time of writing it's not know which will get priority, though given SLAM DUNK's 100+ episodes the kangaroos might get in first. Yes, I can just imagine that those ravishing longlegged hunks might have some serious competition from five goofy kangaroos ... ANIMELAND further reports that YU YU HAKUSHO may appear censored, or not at all, on French TV because it is considered "too violent". Even censored screenings would be progress on boring old British TV! But at least French-speaking fans can enjoy the YU YU HAKUSHO films on Tonkam Video.

ANNECY HONOURS FOR TAKAHATA

Isao Takahata's hit movie from Studio Ghibli, HEISEI TANUKI GASSEN PONPOKO, was named best full-length animated film at the Annecy International Animation Festival this summer. Stablemate PORCO ROSSO, directed by Takahata's colleague Hayao Miyazaki, received the same honour two years ago.

MANGA CHANGE

French video label Manga Power is changing its name to Shuriken Video. (The reason given is that the word *manga* now reminds people of Manga Video.) Among Shuriken's new releases will be the fourth SAINT SEIYA movie, the first RANMA movie and some TV movies based on games, such as SAMURAI SHOWDOWN and ART OF FIGHTING.

CYCLE CINEMANGA GOES NATIONWIDE

Kaze Animation and UCORE S.A. joined forces to show eight Japanese animated films, in their full 35mm versions, with French subtitles, in Les Halles, Paris, this summer. The initiative was so successful that it is to be repeated in sixteen French cities during the autumn and winter. The films featured include ARION, FUTURE BOY CONAN, GALAXY EXPRESS 999, GREY, RANMA 1/2 (the Phoenix Egg cinema special) and the first LEGEND OF GALACTIC HEROES movie.

POLAND WELCOMES SAILOR MOON

The most famous crybaby since I LOVE LUCY hit American screens has made it onto satellite in Eastern Europe. Polsat is now beaming SAILOR MOON down to Polish fans every Wednesday early afternoon.

UK TV DEBUT FOR COCKPIT

Only a brief clip, alas, but part of Leiji Matsumoto's anthology of wartime stories was shown in Channel 4 as part of the TIMEWATCH kamikaze documentary on October 22nd.

FRAIN LEAVES MANGA ENTERTAINMENT?

Fandom and the industry is buzzing with the news that Andy Frain, creator and driving force behind Manga Entertainment's worldwide empire, has left the company. No details are available as we go to press and Manga's staff and PR company can neither confirm nor deny the rumour.

J-FAN LAUNCHES

A new anime magazine to cater for the ever-expanding UK market was launched at ReConTanimeTed. J-FAN comes from Ebony Publishing, and has recruited a number of UK fanwriters to help its editorial team give it that authentic 'fannish' feel. UK news, big reviews and features are presented in a format reminiscent of a games zine, and the bright, in-yer-face cover and design should attract many fans, especially at the younger male end of the market. We wish J-FAN all the best.

GHOST IN THE SHELL SOUNDTRACK CHANGE

The Western release of GHOST IN THE SHELL will now include music by U2, dubbed into Kenji Kanai's astounding music score for the UK and US Market. The decision, while commercially very sound - especially in vieew of UK's huge success with the soundtrack songs on BATMAN FOREVER - is widely considered unfortunate by fans who have heard Kawai's original score in its unaltered state, but now may not have a chance to buy the film with the director's chosen soundtrack and no western additions.

SCI-FI CHANNEL SHOWS ANIME

The UK's newest satellite venue, The Sci Fi Channel, is brightening weekday mornings with showings of ROBOTECH and G-FORCE, the sec-

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ond US edit of SCIENCE NINJA TEAM GATCHAMAN.

SOUTH AMERICA

JAPAN FURY is a new anime zine from Brazil, where Japanese entertainment is a far from new phenomenon. It all started back in 1964 with live-action show NATIONAL KID; now SAINT SEIYA is burning up the airwaves and JAPAN FURY editor-in-chief Jose Roberto Pereira says "Suddenly, my country's getting a super-fever! It's just like a vicious circle: when a new anime starts here, the young otakus want to know more and more about Japanese art and animation." Very little information is available and the readers of JAPAN FURY need the magazine to help them find out more about anime, manga and fandom. If you'd like a copy of JAPAN FURY - printed in Spanish, in full colour - write to Jose to find out about overseas mail order; he is also seeking writers and researchers. (His English is excellent so if your Spanish is as bad as mine, don't worry!) Contact him c/o JAPAN FURY, Estudio P.P.A., Rue Japura, 336, CEP : 01319-010, Sao Paulo, SP, Brazil.

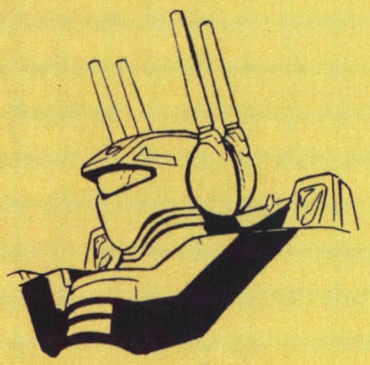
USA

OGRES AND MERMAIDS FROM VIZ

Viz Video has a range of wierd and wonderful creatures on video this winter. In MERMAID'S SCAR, latest in the hugely successful Mermaid series based on Rumiko Takahashi's manga, travelling companions Yuta and Mana encounter a young boy with a terrifying secret. Is little Masato really just an innocent child, and is his relationship with his young mother Misa all it seems? Dubbed into English to Viz's usual high standards, this will be a must for Takahashi fans, as will the latest volumes of RANMA 1/2 : ANYTHING GOES MARTIAL ARTS. And there's another treat for horror fans : OGRE SLAYER, the story of an ogre child whose destiny is to travel the world slaying his own kind, dreaming that one day, when all ogres are extinct, he will become human.

DEVIL HUNTERS AND SPACE MINERS

New from AD Vision, two tapes featuring episodes of DEVIL HUNTER YOKO. The first has episode 4, the music video DEVIL HUNTER YOKO 4-EVER, and 5 on one great-value tape at $34.95. THe first of the 'new' Yoko adventures, in episode 6, has our heroine dealing with double trouble when a girl who's a dead ringer for her shows up at school and not only gets in first with a sexy new teacher, but starts demon-hunting with an assistant who looks just like Yoko's own Azusa. No town is big enough for two Demon Hunters! Rather grittier is the sf adventure MIGHTY SPACE MINERS, described as 'scientifically accurate in every detail' and telling the story of the pilots, scientists and technicians who keep Earth supplied with minerals from deep-space asteroid mines in the year 2060. Both releases have English subtitles.



ROBOTECH CELEBRATES TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Carl Macek, Robert Barron, Greg Snegoff and other ROBOTECH luminaries were honoured guests at ROBOCON 10, the series' tenth birthday celebration held in October in Anaheim, California. Most of the voice artists were present too, and about 500 attendees from all over the USA, Europe and Australia joined them to reminisce and enjoy. Watch out for a con report from Fred Patten, coming soon.

MORE CD-ROM FROM SOFTWARE SCULPTORS

Determined to establish hybrid CD-ROM as a viable third medium for anime, Software Sculptors have launched three more titles in the format. CYBER CITY OEDO 808 VOL 1 includes the first episode of this cyberpunk drama, with English subtitles and the original Japanese soundtrack, as well as the CPM Comics for this episode. ADVENTURE KID VOL 1 also has English subtitles, but UROTSUKIDOJI III: RETURN OF THE OVERFIEND VOL 1 is English dubbed. And for those who just want to Save Their Screens, the latest answer to the S.O.S. call is TENCHI MUYO! THE SCREEN SAVER, including all your favourite characters and the opening and ending songs in English and Japanese.

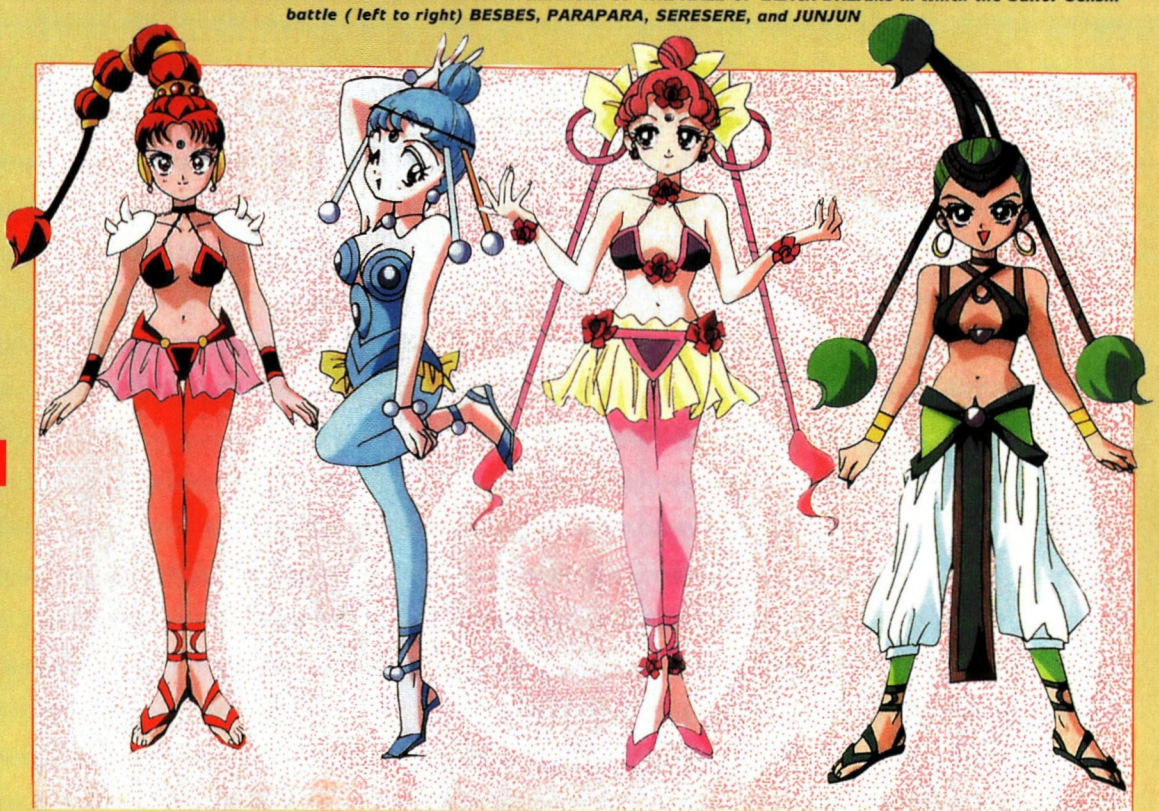
ARRESTING MANGA

Dark Horse Comics is releasing the manga version of TAIHO SHICHAUZO, aka YOU'RE UNDER ARREST. Kosuke Fujishima is already renowned for mega-hit AAA MEGAMISAMA/ OH MY GODDESS! and this earlier work, set in the very different world of the Tokyo Traffic Police Department and without any supernatural intervention, is sure to please his legion of Western fans. Any good comic shop in the USA or Europe can order for you if you have problems finding copies.

ANIMATION SCHOOLS : USA

Anyone who hasn't managed to get into the Toei animation school mentioned last issue might want to consider an American school instead. We're indebted to Fred Patten for news of a book to help them out. THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO ANIMATION AND COMPUTER GRAPHICS SCHOOLS, by Ernest Pintoff, pub-

Below: SAILOR MOON SUPER S: GATHERING OF HE NINE: MIRACLE OF THE HALL OF BLACK DREAMS in which the Sailor Senshi battle (left to right) BESBES, PARAPARA, SERESERE, and JUNJUN



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lished by Watson-Guptill ISBN 0-8230-2177-7, has 320 pages of help and guidance for $16.95 in trade paperback format. It lists schools with helpful information like size, location, facilities offered, range of courses offered, and of course that all-important contact address. It may be of interest to anyone doing animation research because it also includes over fifty short profiles on different aspects of animation by such luminaries as Bill Hanna, Nick Park, Stan Lee, Ralph Bakshi, Faith Hubley and Fred himself, who wrote the profile on anime and comments that he thinks it's significant to note that five years ago anime would not have been considered important enough to rate a mention in a book on the American animation industry.

JAPAN

Look out for the LD release of last winter's SAILOR MOON S movie. Meanwhile SAILOR MOON SS has become SAILOR MOON SUPER S and in the cinema there's a big Christmas treat coming up for fans of the Sailor Senshi with a 23rd December double bill premiere. SAILOR MOON SUPER S : GATHERING OF HE NINE : MIRACLE OF THE HALL OF BLACK DREAMS, in which a megabattle takes place between nine different warriors - these strange amazon women mean trouble for our girls! The other film is YAMI-CHAN'S FIRST LOVE : SAILOR MOON SUPER S SIDE STORY. Look for a video release in the New Year.

DBZ IS DEAD, LONG LIVE DBZ!

Although the manga has finally come to an end, Toei Animation have obtained permission to contine producing anime episodes for television. These will be new episodes written in line with Toriyama's original concepts, but developing the story beyond volume 42 of the manga. They'll start by showing the education of Boo's reincarnation Oob, introduced in the last volume of the manga, then take off into new territory. The LD version of the 12th theatrical release starring Gogeta - the fusion of Goku and Vegeta! - is out now, and the 13th movie will make its LD debut in February 96.

LUPIN HAS A NEW VOICE

Following the death of Yasuo Yamada earlier this year, the annual NTV LUPIN III special went ahead with a new seiyuu, Koichi Kurita, supplying the voice of the much-loved rogue. The adventure, entitled LUPIN III : IN SEARCH OF THE TREASURE OF HARIMAO, was screened in August.

Above: RANMA 1/2 SUPER: LITTLE DEVIL

TV NEWS

Are we back in the 60s or what? GOKINJO MONOGATARI (Neighbours' Story) is based on a recent manga published by Shueisha, about the lives and loves of highschool students. Directed by GHOST SWEEPER MIKAMI director Atsutoshi Umezawa, it's brought a whole new style to the screen.

Below: LUPIN III: IN SEARCH OF THE TREASURE OF HARIMAO

SUPERRANMA!

The latest fix for Takahashi addicts is RANMA 1/2 SUPER, released on both laserdisc and videotape on 17th November by Pony Canyon. The thirty-minute OAV is entitled *Little Devil* and follows the chaos caused when a nasty little red-horned demon stirs up trouble chasing after Kasumi. The production team is Studio Deen.

MEMORIES

Headlined in NEWTYPE as "the arrival of Katsuhiro Otomo's Omnibus Wonderland!!", MEMORIES, which premiered at the Tokyo Film Festival alongside MACROSS PLUS THE MOVIE and GHOST IN THE SHELL, has been three years in the making, and is yet another of the crop of recent releases which have developed the use of computer graphics technology in animation still further, trying for effects that "have never been seen before". Based on his anthology manga, MEMORIES comprises three segments, each with a very different mood.

Magnetic Rose (the segment known in the original Japanese as *Her Memories...*) is a science-fiction tale with a dark twist straight from traditional European horror stories. A salvage crew docks with a giant metallic rose, found floating in the middle of a junkyard in space. It is charged with the memories of a long-dead woman, in more ways than one. Koji Morimoto, who like Otomo worked on that other great anthology ROBOT CARNIVAL, directs, and our own Jonathan Clements comments that the segment is "well hard: Tarkovski directs Alien!" The aptly-named Genius Okamoto directs action-comedy *Stink Bomb*, in which an ordinary Japanese worker, Mr. Tanaka, finds himself caught up in industrial espionage and pursued by the American and Japanese military, all because of a simple mixup over a phial of 'medicine'. *Cannon Fodder*, directed by Otomo himself, takes place on an alien world, but crosses the same kind of ground as GUNDAM 0080 : A WAR IN THE POCKET; in a society dominated by war, a small town is dominated by a giant gun and the man who operates it is an idol to the local kids. One day, though, their views are changed ... MEMORIES sounds like essential viewing, and with a UK and US

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release from Manga Entertainment in prospect, we may not have to wait too long.

THAT'S ONE QUANTUM LEAP FOR A YAKUZA ...

Big money, gang warfare and time travel combine in Toei and Kodansha's OAV series EMBLEM TAKE 2. Gang member Susumu is is deep trouble, a sitting duck for the bullets of the enemy, alone on their turf. Then he gets sucked into a timewarp and spat out again - ten years in the past. But his isn't the usual response (seek out mad professor, try to get back to the future) - he realises that reliving a decade with full foreknowledge and memory has its advantages. He feels younger, stronger, sharper, but he has ten years of yakuza politics, battles, alliances and doublecrosses stored in his mind. He knows who's going to be a top dog in ten years, who's going to be a no-hoper, and who's going to be sleeping with the fishes. He can even get his own back on one of the doublecrossers, his sworn enemy Ehara. He knows what's going to happen - because for him, it already has. Watch out for this gangland tale with a twist.

MAGICAL OAVs

The TV series ended in June, but fans of cute, redhooded little AKAUZUKIN CHACHA can recapture the magic with a three-part OAV series due soon from the same cast and crew as the TV series. Part 1 is out on 6th December, part 2 on 3rd February.

MORE BIZARRE ADVENTURES FOR THE GOLDEN BOY?

The OAV series GOLDEN BOY seems to be developing a pattern which is not unique, though undoubtedly popular; every episode sees 25-year-old hero Ogawa's menial job in an all-female software company throwing him into the company of yet another gorgeous womon, and the role of office bimbo suits him down to the ground. The stress which caused him to take a year out of his studies after graduating in law from the prestigious Tokyo University is greatly eased by being immersed in his two favourite hobbies - women and computers. Tatsuya Egawa's manga has been storyboarded and directed by the very capable Hiroyuki Kitakubo, best known in the West for directing ROUJIN Z, although more recently he has helmed the off-the-wall JOJO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE. Seiyuu conoisseurs may also like to know that stars Mitsu Iwata (Ogawa) and his lady boss Hiromi Tsuru (formerly of GS MIKAMI) will be joined by other big name voice actors for special guest appearances in future episodes.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

Those who think that sex and violence in anime is all about tentacled horrors from other dimensions have it all wrong, as a look at Seiyo Mail Order's OAV series MY SEXUAL HARASSMENT will demonstrate. It's a story of love and lust among the elite of the contemporary business world, most of whom are, of course, male. (One of our reporters described it as an 'ongoing pervofest'.) The third episode, just out, is set in Boston, where our hero Mr. Kizuki is trying to clinch a secret deal for his company which involves him in intimate negotiations with his American opposite numbers. Makes the now-fashionable 'lesbian shock' tendency in British soaps look extremely tame.

SANCTUARY FOR RENTAL

Toho's new 70-minute film of Ryoichi Ikegami's manga SANCTUARY is out on video next month - but only for rental. There's no announcement yet as to when you might be able to take home this tale of two young men seeking fame and fortune in modern Japan by different but equally dark paths.

MEGUMI BACK ON TV

The end of SLAYERS won't mean that fans of the love Ms Hayashibara miss out on the seiyuu's dulcet tones, because BAKURETSU HUNTER is here every Tuesday evening! Our Tokyo top-gun Peter Evans reports that the story is remarkably faithful to the hit manga although the costumes have been toned down - or do we mean up? - for TV exposure; instead of the manga heroine's just-decent braces and trousers, she wears a bikini under a flowing cape. The whip and Nazi-type cap are still there, though, and the humour is as crazy as ever. Everyon is named after cakes; characters have names like Chocora Mist, hero Carrot Glace (a lech in the Ryo Saeba tradition, though a little more restrained), Marron Glace and Mocha.

VIRTUA FIGHTER: PAI and AKIRA

VIRTUA FIGHTER

The director of the anime version of this popular game, Hideki Tonokatsu, has assured gamefans that all the special moves they know and love will be there in the animated fight sequences. Popular characters Pai and Akira meet up with Jackie and Sara on the West Coast of America, and the action of the first dozen or so episodes is set in the USA as they head for the East Coast to try and win a race Jackie is involved in; after that,. the action will move to another continent. All the popular characters from the game feature in the anime, though some of them, like Sara, have changed, and because the anime covers a longer period of time the story can be more complex than that of the game. The game's nemesis, evil organisation J6, is replaced in the anime by another bad-guy grouping, the Tiger Swallow Pavilion, whose leader Lao will first be seen in episode 8. To find out what other changes are afoot - "and the reasons for them" says Mr. Tonokatsu! - you'll just have to watch the show!

TYPO TIME

That ghost in the machine is at it again - and this time he's brought along a few friends ... Apologies for two wild transliterations in the News column of issue 8 - RABON NO KISHI should, of course, have been RIBON NO KISHI, and BACHYAFIGHTER is an 'accurate' but not particularly comprehensible version of VIRTUA FIGHTER. Meanwhile on the letters pages, Helen's terrible handwriting led to the name of the vet in TOKYO BABYLON, Seishiro, being input as Seiji. In our SOL BIANCA feature Helen's phantom scribble struck again, with Yuriko Fuchizaki's name rendered as Huchizaki and Delapas as Derapas. We're insisting she types everything from now on!

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STOP PRESS : ALL GIRLS CLUB!

Launched at ReConTanimeTed, ANIME BABES is a club for female anime fans only. It offers all the usual fanclub services - contacts, tape trading, a newsletter and meetings - but in an atmosphere that can't help but be female-friendly. Its aims are twofold : to encourage more females to get actively involved in anime fandom, and to help get more "girls' stuff" released into the UK market by actively putting the female point of view across to video companies and the media. Female fans from all over the world are welcome to join. To find out more, just send an ssae/IRCs to: LISA MUNNS, 4 TREVALLYN ROAD, LAUNCESTON, CORNWALL, PL15 7HN, UK.

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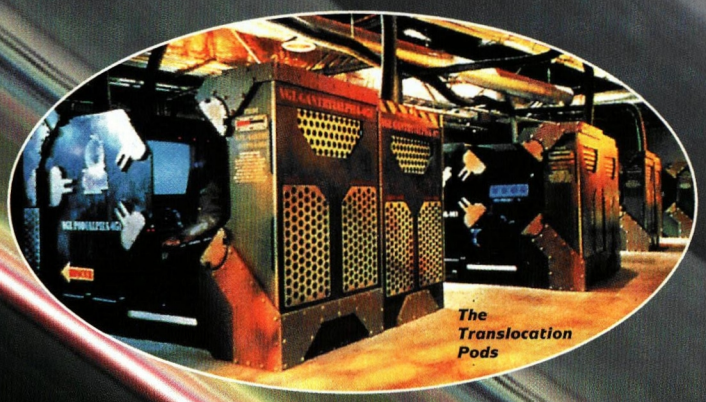
VIRTUAL WORLD™



The Translocation Pods

Jim Swallow, Peter J. Evans and Paul Watson crash'n'burned and hit as hard as they fell; now they give their insights into London's newest entertainment adventure.

The opening of the first European Virtual World site in London's Trocadero centre has been a long time in coming. Originating five years ago in Chicago, Virtual World has since spread to nine American sites (including Dallas, Atlanta, Las Vegas, San Diego and Houston), two Japanese locations, Canada, Singapore and Australia, with a German site planned for the near future. Set in a kind of faux aviator's pub, Virtual World is a video gaming experience with a difference - and that difference is real people. VW's technology traces its lineage from military simulator hardware, used to train their by running networked simulator cockpits in real-time missions. Like those pilots, VW players get to fight not just your everyday computer-controlled sprites, but thinking, reacting people. With the 'sitelink' software up and running in the future, a player in one of VW London's cockpit 'pods' can face off against someone twelve feet away or halfway around the world. The pods themselves are the size of an unpended telephone box, and once the door slams shut, you're ready to be 'translocated' to your gameworld. The pod's controls and buttons number over a hundred, and none of them are window-dressing ... as you play on and advance in levels, more and more of them come online. There's no simple point and shoot here (at least, not after the training missions end) - switches and keypads enable players to reconfigure weapons, monitor vehicle status conditions and manage essential systems, just like real fighter jocks.

Currently, the various Virtual World sites run two different gameworlds, each with its own unique appeal. Best known to anime fans and gamers is the game of giant robot combat, BATTLETECH; Peter J. Evans describes the game's origins in greater detail below. This immersive virtual BATTLETECH has you commanding a four-storey-tall tank on legs with firepower to match, and it's a dream come true for any dyed-in-the-wool mecha fan. While the battlemechs don't exactly come up to the GUNDAM standard, they pretty much emulate the speed of PATLABOR's Labor units and the weaponry of MACROSS. On the basic training missions (the first five sorties) you steer with a joystick and throttle combo, but in later jaunts you can switch to foot pedals and a turret-turning mode, as well as infra-red sighting, pod-to-pod intercoms and a host of other tactical surprises. This current version of the software (which is updated yearly) features twenty weapons types, six mecha types with numerous variants, and four battlezones featuring combinations of open, urban and rocky terrain.

RED PLANET is, by contrast, faster and nastier. Velocity = Victory is the game's tagline and it rings true. In this gameworld players fly Vectored Thrust Vehicles (VTVs) through Death Star trench-style canyons on the surface of Mars in a rocket-powered demolition derby. The same controls are used as in BATTLETECH, with corresponding different functions (booster rockets, braking parachutes and deadly rivet guns) to guide you through increasingly labyrinthine courses. Again, there are nineteen types of VTV and dozens of tracks to choose from. There's also a variant set of rules to plau the Rollerball-like 'Martian Football' game. Far zipper than the tactically-minded BATTLETECH, RED PLANET is more suited to the speedfreak racers among us. After signing in and choosing a call-sign, players pay for their chosen sortie and take a seat in the pub where they can watch games in progress "live" via monitors, check out the gift shop or delve through the touch-screen computers that contain data on both games and the invented backstory behind Virtual World. When called, players are shown a short movie illustrating the concepts of the games and controls (featuring stars like Joan Severance, Judge Reingold and Wierd Al Yankovic), briefed by a technician and then thrown into the game; after the dust settles, players are taken back to the bar and given a debriefing, action replay and concise score sheet for the ten-minute game. There's clearly an anime fan presence at VW London, with call-signs like Battle Angel, Macross and Gunbuster already in evidence; and with a hlepful staff always willing to give rookies a tip or hint, there's much here to keep you coming back.

JIM SWALLOW

Virtual World - The Wargames View

The evolution of Battletech from board game to VR experience is a classic example of 'great oaks from little acorns'. The project began with one boardgame, Battledroids, which was a hex-based simulation of combat between giant robots on the battlefields of the future. The mecha designs were shamelessly lifted from anime shows like Macross, Crusher Joe and Dougram, the game system sprawling and overcomplex, and the little plastic robots supplied wouldn't fit into the hexagons on the board. Despite this, the game has undergone several revisions (plus a name change, due to legal intervention from Star Wars creator George Lucas), and is now the centre of an expanding game universe. Scenario packs, novels, technical readout books and the new animated series give Battletech a rich background of history and detail. Other games, like Battlespace and Aerotech, have taken the fight into the atmosphere and beyond, while a role-playing system, Mechwarrior, gives players the chance to take the roles of mech pilots and adventure in the worlds of the Inner Sphere.

While the wars of Battletech can be fought at every scale from personal to fleet action, the heart of the game is still one very large robot blasting chunks off another. The boardgame system has been refined and simplified, giving players a chance to get aquainted with a set of basic rules before taking on the complexities of advanced play. Each mech in the game is represented by a counter on the hex-map (either a cardboard stand-up or model in metal or plastic), and an A4 sheet of information, containing lists of available weapons, dice tables, and endless circles to cross off as bits of your mech go flying across the battlefield. In the advanced rules, players must deal with heat generated by the actions of their mech - too much heat, and the machine will shut down or suffer damage - and more complicated weapon and damage mechanics. All of this comes back to that info sheet, and means that players wishing to fight teams of mechs against each other have a lot of paperwork on their hands...

One of the great advantages of the Virtual World version of Battletech is that it involves no dice or pencils. In basic play, the game has little more to do with Battletech than the premise - pilot a giant robot (one of FASA's own designs; all the anime mechs have been given the boot), and shoot other giant robots until they either come apart or you do. It may as well be tanks, ships, or anything else that fights in only two dimensions. Once you move onto advanced play, however, the real problem of piloting forty tonnes of walking target present themselves: heat buildup is represented, weapon systems can be reconfigured, and your mech can swivel at the waist, making it even more difficult to work out which way you are moving.

As a simulation of piloting a battlemech, the Vitual World game works well enough, especially when you get good enough to work in teams (called Lances) and start having to worry about just how much heat a

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heavy laser actually generates. Nevertheless, I can't help thinking that at seven quid a go, three ten-minute sessions will buy you a copy of the boardgame, a scenario pack and all the pencils you can use.

P. J. EVANS

VIRTUAL WORLD - THE CONSOLE GAMES VIEW

BATTLETECH, the mecha combat simulator was first on our agenda and the aim of the game was total destruction. Although there were a variety of mecha available, we all ended up in the Thor V6 for our training mission. The graphics of the game were functional, with the mechs and scenery looking good but without the frills of texture mapping and such like. The terrain we fought in was flat and fairly lacking in things to hide behind but as we were in training this was for our benefit anyway. The sound effects were also functional, with the explosions and other effects booming in your ear, adding to the isolated experience. Higher difficulty levels also give you the opportunity to communicate with other players which is a very nice touch. The game itself was quite fast and frantic and a minute or two was needed to get to grips with the controls and on-screen displays. Needless to say, once the basic controls were mastered, I waded in guns ablazing leaving a wanton trail of destruction in my wake. Strategy also played a major part in the proceedings, knowing when to stand away from the melee and when to run in and remove limbs proved very useful for a victory and that is where the satisfaction of the game really hit home. As with most games, there's nothing quite like reducing a friend to blazing rubble, and as there were eight of us, this just upped the enjoyment of it. With a variety of different mechs available and the various levels of play (even the control system we played with was the basic one) there's no denying the scope of what's on offer here.

Trading in our mechs for something a bit sportier we entered the racing madness of RED PLANET. As in BATTLETECH, we were in training so we only got the basic craft, the easy course and the simple controls. The graphics were in a similar style to BATTLETECH but this time the terrain included walls, obstacles, tunnels and other things guaranteed to make you into street pizza. The sound effect were, as in BATTLETECH, functional. The controls were easy to get to grips with (despite turbo boosting into a wall at the start of the race) and the craft responded well to the controls. The game was simpler to play than BATTLETECH but just as much fun, with VTVs hitting walls (and each other) with frightening frequency. The course was quite varied with ramps to leap over, blast doors to avoid being crushed in and narrow corridors that made head on collisions impossible to avoid, and they all contributed to a hair raising gaming experience.

At the culmination of each game, score sheets were handed to each player giving detailed analysis of the games and the scores for each player.These are ideal for a post- game banter with friends and possible cause for argument when you realise who it actually was that gave you a hard time during BATTLETECH. Excellent stuff.

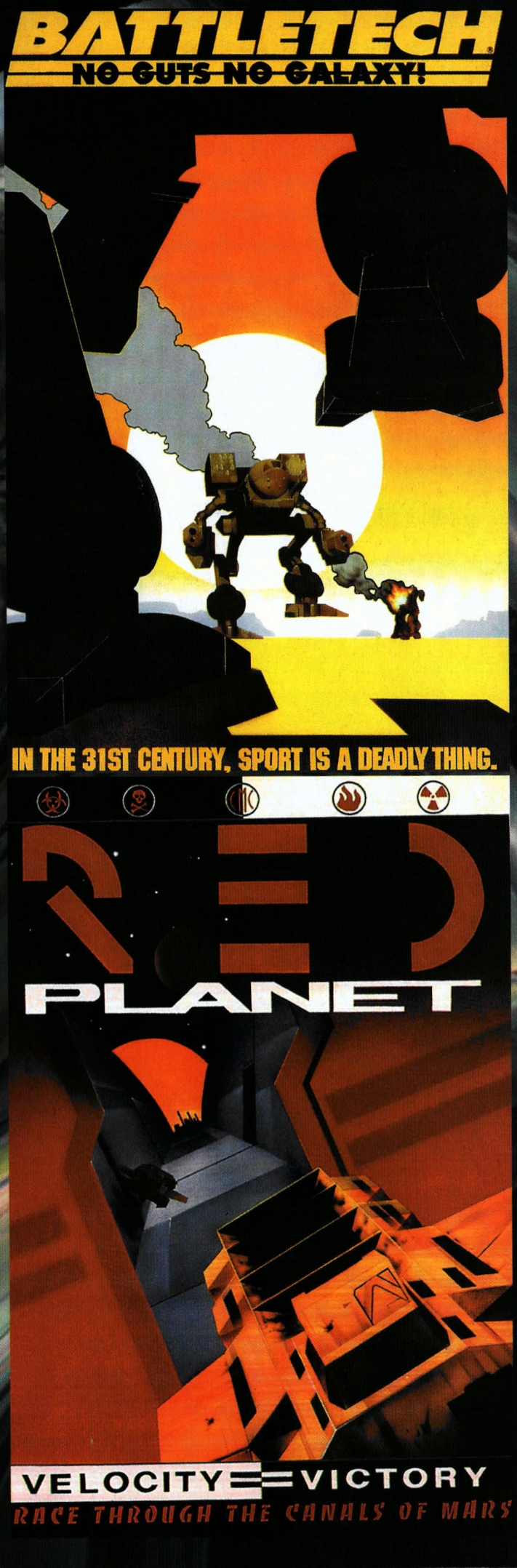
The games were both great fun to play and, despite the price, are worth having a try of just to feel the experience the total- immersion game-play. Try it and enjoy.

PAUL WATSON

Virtual World's fees are £1.00 worldwide life membership (including free bimonthly newsletter), £7.00 per game sessions, with discounts for students and under-sixteens. There are also plans to institute family and 'frequent flyer' discounts. The location is open every day except Christmas Day from 10 a.m. to 12 midnight.

VW's web sites can be found at http://www.virtualworld.com and http://metrotel.co.uk/vw/vw.html

Special thanks to Carol "Barbarella" Trower and Karl "Indiana" Hartwig for their kind assistance. Team AFX's Virtual Adventurers were Steve "Gojira" Kyte, Helen "Obachan" McCarthy, Peter "Sponge" Evans, Jim "Redwing" Swallow, Paul "Sakana San" Watson, and Jonathan "V-daan" Clements.


BATTLETECH
NO GUTS NO GALAXY!
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RED PLANET
VELOCITY = VICTORY
RACE THROUGH THE CANALS OF MARS

EXPANDING YOU

As more people around the world grow to love the unique qualities of Japanese animation (and live action shows) it is only natural to actively seek new sources of video cassettes, and even LDs, that haven't received an official release from the distributors in your own country.

In the UK, Japanese anime availability has increased substantially since the appearance of Manga Video. However, have you ever seen anime videos in shops while on holiday abroad that are not available in your own country, but are unsure if they play on your VCR back home? Or would love to buy some of those NTSC anime videos from your local stockist? Well, I hope I can be of some assistance to you...

WORLD FORMATS

Although VHS video cassettes are pretty much the home video standard used throughout the world, the fact that a cassette is VHS format does not necessarily mean it is compatible with your country's TV and video system. Not to be confused with a popular brand of dog-food, PAL is the TV and video standard currently used here in the UK. In fact there are three main world TV standards:

PAL (Phase Alternating Line) as used by the UK and most of Europe.

SECAM (Sequentiel Couleur ... Memoire) the French standard.

NTSC (National Television Systems Commission) used in America and Japan.

There is literally a whole world of anime available from various countries, either shown on TV or on pre-recorded cassettes. The list of classic unreleased. Japanese films, OAVs and TV series is too mind-blowing to even contemplate!

Taking the UK as an example, due to the sheer volume of animation produced in Japan since the 1960's it is quite understandable that much hasn't or is unlikely to be released in Britain, because of limited appeal, content, or simply that it is showing its age. However, it is quite legal to mail order, or bring back from a holiday, any anime videos from abroad - as long as they are for private use in your own home. It doesn't usually matter if they have not been passed or certified by the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification) for release in the UK. It must be said that certain genres of anime thatfeature excessive sex or violence may be confiscated by customs if they inspect the content of your parcels. Most anime fans will be aware of Japan's higher tolerance of extreme violence and sexual content in anime. This often results with offending scenes being removed before they can be sold in the UK - such as with ADVENTURE DUO (KIDS). Also note that in the USA anime is often distributed uncut or unrated by certificate. So if you aren't sure of the tape's content it may be wise to avoid anime titles that would never see the light of day if submitted to the BBFC. There are a wide range of anime genres that are suitable for a general audience that you can choose from.

PAL

Unlike England's distinct lack of regular anime series on TV, SPAIN, ITALY, GERMANY (PAL) and FRANCE (SECAM) have enjoyed broadcasts of classic dubbed Japanese TV series for many years. It would be impossible to list all anime TV shows ever shown in Europe, but genres cover giant robot, sport, shoujo, kids, adventure, comedy, etc. Why not write to a European anime fan and get them to tell you what we've been missing...

Hong Kong (yes, they use PAL too) shows many feature films on TV often with dual English and Chinese subtitles.

Video cassettes originating from these, PAL, countries will play as normal on any standard PAL VCR and TV (such as those we use in the UK); with the exception of French SECAM tapes that will usually only play back a picture in black and white. Obviously, also note that most shows will be dubbed in the language of the country of origin, or less commonly Japanese with non-English subtitles.

In the UK you can find dubbed or subtitled Cantonese language anime videos in London's China Town. Two shops with a fairly large stock are SOUNDS OF CHINA and CANNON & CO. Particularly abundant are the ever popular RANMA NIBUNNOICHI, DRAGONBALL, SAILOR MOON and (as you might expect) martial arts/fighting anime OAVs. You may even be lucky enough to pick up such Miyazaki/Takahata gems as NAUSICAA & the wonderful OMOIDE PORO PORO. Typical prices are £13 upwards. Although most of the videos will be roughly the same as the Japanese original versions, be aware that the Cantonese version of NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND (known as 'VALLEY OF THE WIND') suffered a similar fate as the English language dub, WARRIORS OF THE WIND.

NTSC

So, most of Europe uses PAL (as we do in the UK) and there are no problems using their video cassettes. However, cassettes obtained from JAPAN or the USA require a VCR capable of NTSC playback and often a suitable TV too.

Japan is obviously the source of ALL anime, but again understandably it's all Japanese language only-although, if you do manage to acquire any original Japanese anime, it is sometimes possible to locate scripts or synopses via the Internet if you real ly want them.
A large variety of English dubbed and subtitled anime is available in the USA on video cassette, although relatively little is shown on TV. The best thing is that it's in a language that we in the UK can understand! The popular mail-order company NIKAKU ANIMART will accept International orders (including the UK) but unfortunately only if more than $100 in value. (they also stock a huge range of manga, CDs, books, etc.) Contact them at: NIKAKU ANIMART, 615 North 6th Street, San Jose, CA 95112, USA email: nikaku@netcom.com (subject: 'catalog')

Other than visiting Japan or USA, a penpal is probably the easiest way to obtain a wide range of NTSC anime. If a penpal is kind enough to purchase tapes on your behalf and then post them to you, this will avoid the expense and hassle of having to convert your money to foreign currency, etc.

UK NTSC ANIME AVAILABILITY

A small selection of English language, subbed or dubbed, NTSC anime video tapes can be found in FORBIDDEN PLANET on New Oxford Street, London. The stock

Left to right: Sailor Moon, My Neighbour Totoro, Record of Lodoss War and Dragonball Z. All available overseas - Expand your anime horizons!

R ANIME WORLD

by Chris K Jackman

seems to change regularly but tends to consist mainly of older titles such as ASTROBOY and GIGANTOR. Typical prices are £12 upwards.

NTSC COMPATIBLE VCRS in the UK

It is becoming more common for typical PAL VCRs in the UK to include some form of NTSC playback as a standard feature. These VCRs function as any regular PAL model but have the facility to playback NTSC cassettes - although most won't record English TV programs in NTSC. A small number include full colour SECAM playback compatibility too.

You may be lucky enough to own an NTSC compatible VCR and TV already, but might not be aware of it. Take a look in the manual and it should mention the fact under sections like 'Specifications' or 'Playback Instructions'.

Most typical 'high street' electrical stores such as Dixons, or even mail order catalogues like 'Kays', will have at least one model of VCR capable of NTSC playback even if they fail to note it in the description. A larger range of models can be found at specialist electrical retailers. In addition to looking through the TV/VIDEO magazines from newsagents it is a good idea to write to several UK TV/video manufactures. They will be more than willing to send you their current brochures and often include a list of approved retailers in your local area that stock their hardware too. Then you can compare the specifications at your leisure before seeing what your local retailers have to offer.

Toshiba, Philips, Panasonic and Akai all have models with NTSC playback. Prices can go as low as £270 for the mono model of Toshiba's current 'v3' series. Features such as: 'long-play' recording, scart, video+, nicam and a real-time counter are well worth the money. In the end, features and prices vary greatly so the final choice is pretty much up to you.

One thing to note well, a VCR in NTSC mode may not always share the full functions that are normally available while in PAL tape mode. For instance, in NTSC playback the sound may only be in mono even if you have nicam during PAL playback. Functions like pause and the real-time counter may not operate, due to the different speeds that NTSC tapes play back at when compared with regular PAL tapes. Make sure you check things like this before you buy. Panasonic VCRs seem to be a good choice when it comes to stereo NTSC playback. Also be aware that as well as the usual 'SP' (short play) and 'LP' (long play) double play time modes, the USA also uses 'EP' - extended play. This triples play time, i.e. a 2-hour cassette is able to record 6 hours.

'SPECIAL' VCRs

If you need to duplicate NTSC tapes you'll require two VCRs (usually of the same make/model) that feature 'pure' NTSC output. 'Pseudo' NTSC VCRs will only output a semi converted PAL signal so don't expect to be able to copy NTSC tapes to standard PAL, or make an NTSC copy, with this type. However, these two VCRs may help.

AIWA hv-mg3505 multi digital converter system, £499
Record/play/convert between PAL (sp,lp), NTSC (sp,lp,ep) and SECAM also features a multi PAL/SECAM TV channel tuner

PANASONIC NVW1, £1,379 (!)
Record and playback in ANY world TV broadcast system! However, this has NO tuner so you can't record TV programs unless a second VCR is connected.(features: stereo sound in sp only, sp/lp & slow motion in all tape formats, phono audio/video in/out)

UK TELEVISIONS

It must be noted that a large percentage of PAL VCRs offering NTSC playback also require an NTSC compatible TV. The reason is that most only partially convert the NTSC signal, from the VCR to PAL and leave your TV to automatically decipher this signal into a stable picture. NTSC tapes should play with a picture quality roughly equal to what you'd expect from any PAL tape you're likely to find in the UK. If your TV does not automatically display a 'normal' picture during playback of an NTSC tape, and exhibits very bad vertical rolling, it is sometimes possible to use the 'vertical hold' adjustment of your TV to stabilise the picture. However, in this case, the resulting picture will have horizontal bars at the top and bottom of the screen and a slightly 'squashed' appearance. If your TV has no vertical hold adjuster then you will not be able to correct this problem and you will just have to buy a suitable TV. Some top of the range (expensive) VCRs can convert the NTSC signal completely into PAL that will display on any PAL TV.

Most TV manufacturers (Sony, Hitachi, Philips, etc.) feature models of televisions that will function as any regular PAL model but have the facility to view signals from NTSC cassettes and more rarely SECAM.

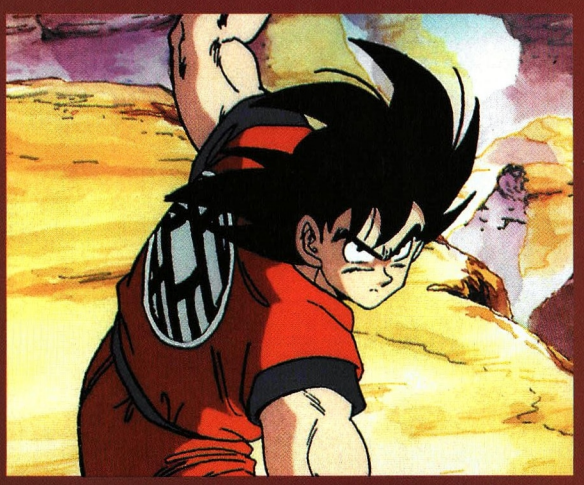
If you are thinking of buying a PAL VCR with NTSC playback and you are not sure if your TV is actually able to display an NTSC picture (should it need to), the best thing to do is explain to the retailer that you want to make use of the VCR's NTSC playback facility and ask if you can return it if you discover your TV is not able to cope. Also, it wouldn't hurt to take an NTSC tape into the shop just to see what sort of playback the VCR does deliver.

TIP: If you have access to a Commodore Amiga home computer, running 'Workbench 2' (or greater), you can fairly easily test to see if your TV is capable of displaying NTSC signals. Just run Workbench, install and select an NTSC monitor through Preferences (check the manual for full details). If your Workbench screen alters to looking slightly more squashed than usual then all is well. However, if the picture on your TV goes crazy and you are not able to correct it with the vertical hold adjustment (mentioned earlier) then you can assume that you are not blessed with a PAL TV/monitor capable of viewing NTSC signals...

Don't worry if your TV is not stereo, most stereo VCRs can be connected to your home stereo system instead with little trouble.

Finally, be aware that combined TVs and VCRs with NTSC playback facility are available such as this AIWA model; AIWA vx s140k combined 14" TV and VCR,£600 stereo hi-fi (not nicam) sound in both PAL and NTSC, phono audio/video out, short-play (normal) speed only

For a fairly comprehensive list of addresses for the major UK video and TV manufacturers have a look in 'WHAT VIDEO' magazine at your local newsagent.



ダークサイド・ブルース

HERE COMES THE NIGHT

Introduced by ***Helen McCarthy****,*
with translation by ***Jonathan Clements***

Illustration by Yuho Ashibe

With interest in all things vampiric and horrid continuing to run high, the 90s look like being the night creatures' best decade since the glory days of Hammer Films. Anime like DARKSIDE BLUES fit in perfectly. Created in 1985 as a fantasy story by Hideyuki Kikuchi and Yuho Ashibe, the tale grew in popularity with fans, and Tokuma Shoten published a manga version (in Bonita Comics) in 1993. A year later, the animated film had its theatrical release.

Kikuchi's interest in vampires was clearly stated in his earlier VAMPIRE HUNTER 'D', and he has always professed an interest in such classic horror writers as H.P. Lovecraft. Ashibe is perhaps best known for the manga CRYSTAL DRAGON, a blend of historical and fantasy influences with the fragility of the shojo style.
The style of the movie is an elegant fusion of European and Japanese influences. So many motifs familiar to Dracula fans - the black coach, the great mirror with no reflection on its surface, the spider, the fallen angel - are placed throughout the film, often in the background, building up layers of atmosphere and resonance. Yet the setting is not the nineteenth century, but the twenty-first; the world of the future is unable to escape the half-forgotten yet still powerful magic of the past.

The cast included some of anime's big names. The male voice team is anchored on the massive talents of Akio Otsuka, currently enjoying acclaim for his role as Batou in GHOST IN THE SHELL but with a background in roles ranging from Captain Nemo in THE SECRET OF BLUE WATER to Papa Moomin in THE MOOMINS and Rhett Butler in the Japanese dub of GONE WITH THE WIND, and Koichi Yamadera, a seiyuu of vast experience best known in Japan for his work on the Japanese versions of Disney movies like ALADDIN and BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. The bishonen Darkside is played by an accomplished performer, Natsuki Akira of the famous Takarazuka theatre troupe; although this is her first anime role she has been playing ravishing young heroes live onstage for most of her career. Androgynous Katari is played by Nozomu Sasaki, best known to UK fans as Ushio in USHIO & TORA: UK fans may also recognise Tatsuya,

DARKSIDE BLUES

voiced by Koji Matsumoto, who was in HUMMINGBIRDS, and has also worked on KO CENTURY BEAST WARRIORS and TEKKAMAN BLADE. Among the ladies, Kotono Mitsuishi, best known for such sweet young things as SAILOR MOON and Satsuki in HUMMINGBIRDS, gets a much tougher, stronger role as terrorist leader Mai.

PLOT (SORT OF)

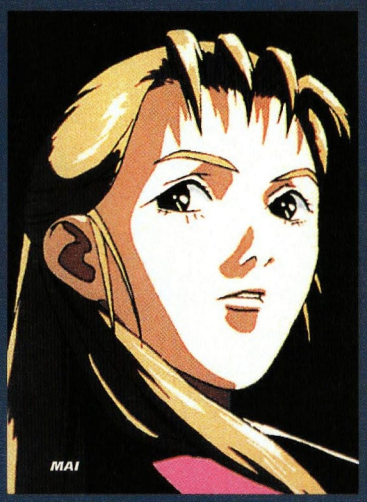
The near future. The Persona Century (PC) Corporation rules the world through the ministrations of the powerful Hogetsu family. There are no longer any countries, or any borders save those placed by the Hogetsu clan, who have carved the world into nine regions for the purposes of their rule. All the world is now dominated by a single power. All? No, not all; a small village of indomitable Japanese still resists the omnipotent PC. Kabuki Town, in what used to be the Tokyo district of Shinjuku, is a wildly anarchic area, the most liberated place on Earth, but also the most dangerous. Some have been known to refer to it as the 'Tokyo Darkside'.

The Mecia Group, based in Kabuki Town, are a gang of lawless terrorists who continue to conduct a fearless campaign against the PC Corporation. As they flee from one of their most recent bombing attacks, Mecia's leader Mai and her cohort Kenzo are surprised by the arrival of a stagecoach, drawn by black horses, that seems to have materialised in the middle of the darkness and chaos around them. A beautiful young man greets them, introducing himself as 'Darkside'. A strange name, but then again, he's clearly not from around these parts...

Meanwhile, PC has had enough of the terrorist activities, and starts to clamp down hard. Gren and Tamaki Hogetsu, the brother and sister responsible for maintaining order, start to call in their favours from the other members of the Hogetsu family, and even attempt to enlist the aid of the proles. A reward is offered for any information that leads to the apprehension of the ringleaders of the Mecia Group, and the cold-blooded master assassin, Enji Hogetsu, is called back from his proctorship in Africa.

Mai and Kenzo find themselves on the run from PC's Strengthened Humans, who have been sent out to hunt down the rebel leaders and bring them back for PC's brand of 'justice', but are helped when they run into an ex-revolutionary, Tatsuya. Hiding out at sympathiser Seria's house, awaiting contact with another resistance group, the AP, they find themelves under attack from PC's crack assassination squad. How did a 'safe' house suddenly become a target? Has the terrorist network been infiltrated? Just when all seems lost, the mysterious Darkside materialises once more. And then the story really begins...

DARKSIDE


MAI

KATARI

ENJI HOGETSU

DARKSID

Western Connection have been linked with DARKSIDE BLUES' proposed UK release. We eagerly await more news of this fascinating story.

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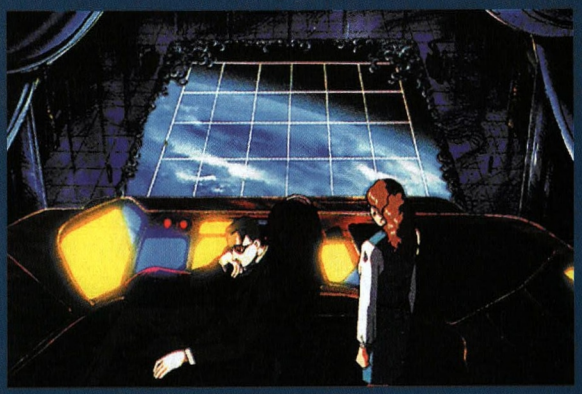
Illustration right: by Yuho Ashibe

PC CORPORATION HEADQUARTERS



KENZO, KATARI and MAI

DIRECTOR
Yoshimichi Furukawa
SCRIPT
S. Sekijima
CHARA DESIGN/
KEY ANIMATION
Hiro Hamasaki
DARKSIDE
Natsuki Akira
MAI
Kotono Mitsuishi
KENZO
Akio Otsuka
KATARI
Nozomu Sasaki
TATSUYA
Koji Matsumoto
GREN
Hideyuki Hori
TAMAKI
Maki Kachisa
ENZO
Koichi Yamadera

GREN HOGETSU

TAMAKI HOGETSU

E BLUES

GHOST IN THE SHELL

Our reviewer last issue, Sakura Studio's Peter Evans, said that he couldn't comment on the English dub of the movie because he'd only heard the Japanese. Helen McCarthy saw the English dub. Here's her personal view of the most-hyped anime of the year.

The first impression as the film starts to roll is the amazing impact of Kenji Kawai's score. The eerie, etherial female voices chanting, the traditional Japanese instruments, and the echo of the electronic dimension in which director Mamoru Oshii has set all the most important developments of the film sweep in and enfold you in another world. This isn't a wall of sound, powerful as it is; this is a mist of sound, enwrapping, absorbing, subtle. It continues through the film, perfectly judged, adding to the tension, helping the story achieve its aims. It's an incredible score, part and parcel of a superb soundtrack, carefully mixed under the director's supervision to create the aural environment of a world which is no longer purely physical.

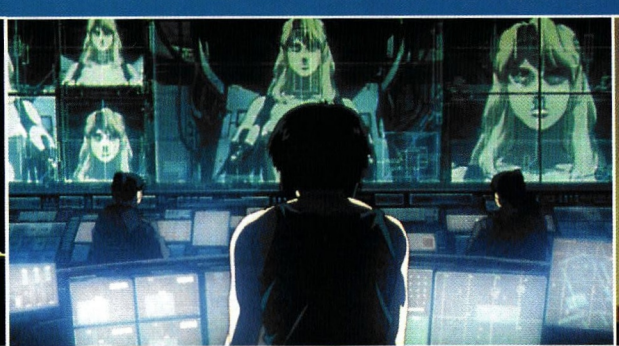
Sadly, it won't be quite the same the Western video release, which will feature the work of U2 spliced onto the soundtrack. That's a sensible commercial decision because the chart band are undoubtedly more marketable and more accessible to the average Western audience than is Kawai. It's just a tragedy in terms of the director's intent and the ambience of the film. Those of us who saw GHOST IN THE SHELL at ReConTanimeTed were lucky; the U2 music hasn't been mixed yet, so we got the unalloyed Japanese soundtrack, with English voices mixed, according to Oshii himself, under his close supervision. Get your CD order off to the specialist shops now; however good the U2 score is - and they can make film music, no doubt of that - it cannot possibly convey Oshii's and Shirow's world as well as the music of someone born in it and working as part of the film's creative team.

The end credits were still those for the Japanese version, so the Japanese voice actors instead of the Western ones were credited. For the most part they do a good job, the sole exception being the Western Motoko Kusanagi, who is most emphatically not a replacement for any actress of the calibre of Atsuko Tanaka. She appears to have taken to heart the fact that her character is primarily a cyborg and invests her lines with all the emotion and intensity one would expect from a pound of uncooked cod fillet. Since she is the central figure of a human drama as well as an action-adventure, this is unfortunate. This is a film that needs a powerful actor in the role of Motoko to carry the long expository passages in which she and other characters - Togusa, Batou, the Puppet Master - essentially just talk.

Luckily it isn't only a talking-heads film, despite the amount of exposition the story demands. The talking-head sequences fit the context and are intelligently directed. There are also bursts of action every ten minutes, and what bursts of action they are - a well-handled car chase, a pursuit through a street market and into the deserted riverside area, a garbage truck blown away in a hail of ammo, plenty of excitement to keep those of more limited attention span happy through the talky bits.

Aside from the music, the single most stunning aspect of the film is the quality of the animation itself. Going further down the road of integrating computer graphics with cel animation than ever before, the effects it achieves are impressive in retrospect rather than at the time, because at the time you hardly notice them; it's only later, considering and dissecting the whole seamless illusion for review purposes, that you realise how brilliantly you have been deceived into accepting this two-dimensional world as more real than real. Oshii himself said in a recent interview in NEWTYPE magazine that anyone used to working with traditional methods - 'analogue' rather than 'digital' animation - has to relearn not just their working methods but their worldview. The payback is the ability to do some things that have never been done before. In the two-dimensional world of animation, camerawork is necessarily limited. "You can't do some of the most basic cinematic things", said Oshii in a recent NEWTYPE interview, "such as zooming in or creating a sense of parallax. Digital animation makes it a lot easier to create visual tricks that give an illusion of three dimensional space, such as parallax, where objects in the foreground pass by 'faster' than those in the background, or artificial focus-pulling *[where an object 'closer' to the camera is rendered out-of-focus, in order to give the impression that an object in-focus in the 'background' is several feet away]*. Those have always been difficult things to get right in animation, but digital animation could present a way forward."

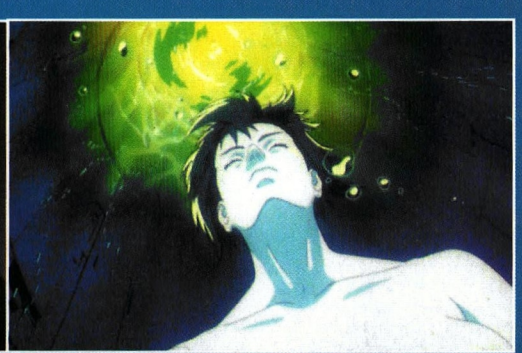
And it does. Rain and deep water are recurring motifs in GHOST IN THE SHELL, and the animation of



water has never been bettered and only rarely equalled. The artistry of the background paintings and traditional cel work is of a very high order, but the carefully controlled and intelligently directed digital element adds another dimension, enhanced every time by Kawai's music. There's an amazing sequence where a cyborg body is not so much being assembled as evolving in a ballet of directing intelligence and obedient machinery in the eternally fluid medium of information, and one where Kusanagi rises slowly from the dark, fathomless depths of the bay in which she dives to find peace, to challenge her own fears, to discover her self. The analogy with human evolution is subtle yet unmistakeable. Millions of years ago primordial intelligences, still too primitive to foresee their eventual capabilities, crawled out of the sea where they had evolved from sparks of blind and thoughtless energy and began to develop new strategies for survival and growth. What's the difference between the early days of life on earth and the early days of life in cyberspace? How is an intelligence that evolves from the conditions prevailing today to a state of independent and self-determining thought any different from our ancestors, from ourselves?

What is the self? That's Shirow's central question in his manga - in the whole of his work, from the dojinshi days of BLACK MAGIC onwards - and Oshii addresses it in the film. The ghost, the soul, the self, is the life-form, the thinking, feeling, creative energy. The shell it occupies is only what circumstances dictate. In the early days of evolution, the shell was whatever physical form it could make, and the ones that didn't work were discarded. Unfortunately we hadn't devised a way of transferring the self out of its shell, so when the shell stopped working, that was the end of that particular individual. Things have been that way for a few million years now, but evolution hasn't stopped with the current form of mankind. We're living in a blink of the shutter of time, and next time the shutter opens it could be another image entirely that registers on the film. The difference is that now we are conscious of the possibility

With thanks to Jonathan Clements for translation assistance, and toSteve Kyte for his observations on Shirow, and respect and gratitude to NEWTYPE magazine for consistently publishing useful information on all aspects of anime, which is of great help to researchers all over the world.

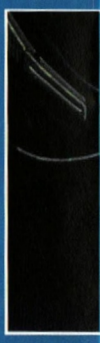


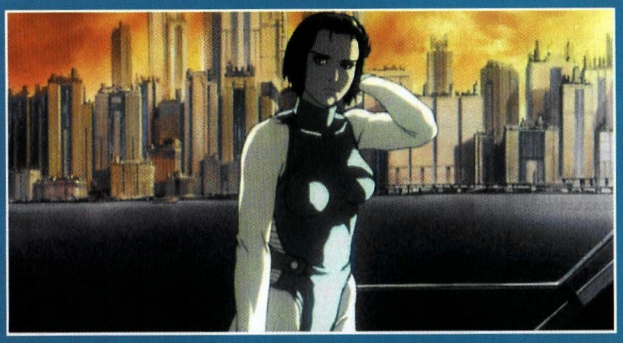
of re-forming ourselves, and concerned to define and preserve those selves, whatever new forms we invent to hold them.

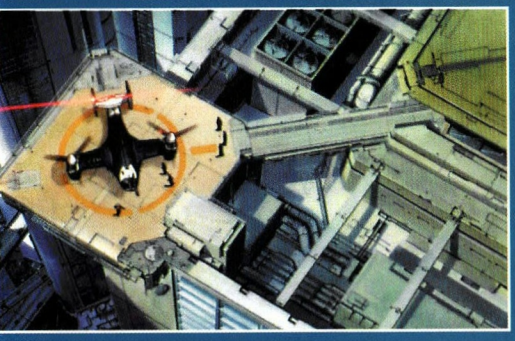
It's in this area of defining and preserving the self that Oshii's own contribution to Shirow's story is significant. Oshii has, in his own words, "introduced a basic male/female drama ... The technology involved in this take on human evolution is incredibly complicated, but *[this approach]* allows us to simplify matters suitably". Motoko Kusanagi and the Puppet Master, both to a greater or lesser extent evolutionary products of the human race's relentless development, choose to 'marry' and produce a new life form - a fusion of both physical and digital 'genes' which is more than the sum of their parts. The relationship involves growth, change, some sacrifices on both sides, and an immense gain in strength, understanding and ability as both become one. If that isn't a marriage, what is?

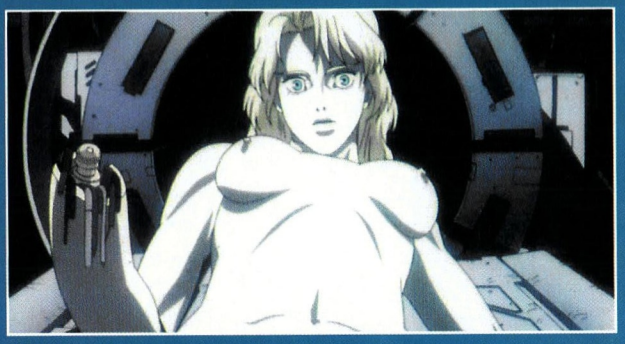
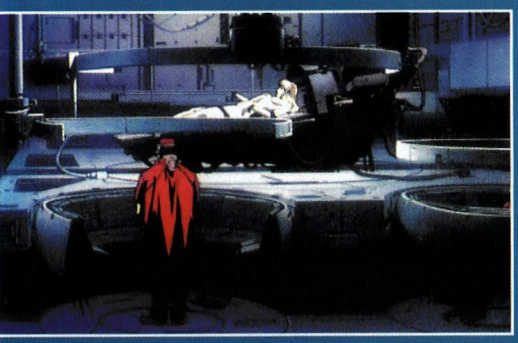
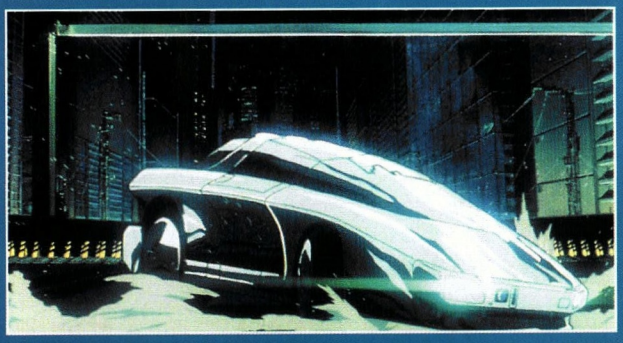
But is this marriage made in idealist heaven or digital hell? Oshii isn't sure - or isn't saying - but he is sure that the metaphor is the right one. "In the original manga there's talk of fusion, but I prefer the term 'marriage' because it allows me to exploit the male/female imagery along with the technical. I think working in metaphors allows us to reach greater levels of explication. Of course we want to tell a high-tech, complicated story, but we have to find a way of making it accessible. It's not easily expressed in words ... you can't tell the same story with a film as you do with a manga or a novel. I think a film has to be more direct in its message, or at least, that's what I hoped to be with this."

More direct it certainly is. After Shirow's dense and elliptical manga, after all the talk of the difficulties of the story, what emerges onscreen is a beautifully crafted and balanced visual universe, a classic example of form following function, complex, but no less comprehensible in its context than the double helix of DNA. The story is quite straightforward. A division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the direction of Nakamura, has been involved for some time in developing arcane intelligence-gathering and subversion programmes with the aid of an American scientist, Dr. Willis. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, for which Mokoto Kusanagi, Batou and the others work under chief Aramaki, becomes involved almost accidentally and without realising exactly what is going on. They are aware of the 'Puppet Master' as an international criminal hacker about whom little is known - except that he's believed to be of American origin - but it takes them a while to perceive the extent of the







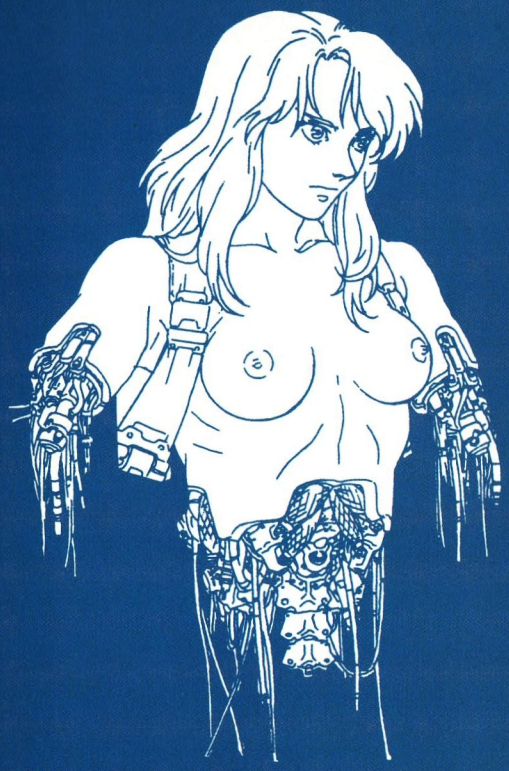




whole scheme, which has ramifications extending from the lowest sectors of the community, 'unenhanced' humans who are just so much cannon fodder to be used and discarded, to the highest echelons of international politics. And only Kusanagi realises the full implications of the Puppet Master's existence. Troubled by the contradictions of her own 'enhanced' body and brain functions and the effect of her cyborg extensions on her self, her 'ghost' as the film calls it, she gradually realises that they are looking, not at a human being or a rogue programme, but at a new form of life offering a new way forward for her and for those like her. In an exchange as tense and dramatic as any action sequence, even though it takes place almost entirely in the 'ghost territory' of the mind, she decides to take the ultimate risk, to trust another being with her entire self. The film ends in uncharted territory, with the adventure of a new life spread out at her feet like the glittering lights of the world she inhabits, but is no longer tied to. Like those early, evolutionary life forms that crawled out of the water, she has left the element in which she was born and is going somewhere else.

So in terms of animation quality and complexity, of the number of interesting ideas raised, of the director's soundtrack and the music, the film is a wonderful achievement, an elegant, intelligent and thought-provoking piece. But the questions everyone really wants answered are, is it as good as its hype, and will it be as big as AKIRA? And the answer to both is no.

No film could be as good as the hype which GHOST IN THE SHELL has had to sustain. It very nearly makes it; but there's something missing. In part it's down to the complete absence from this film of Shirow's touches of humour and the personality with which he imbues his character. In all the talk about how dense and often misleading his plots are, we seem to have lost sight of the humanity and hilarity which creep in everywhere in his writing. Motoko in particular has suffered; like Deunan in the anime version of APPLESEED, she's gone from being a rounded person to a kick-ass female cipher, a TERMINATOR with optional tits. Shirow's manga characters laugh and cry, but not in this movie.

Thinking about the differences between Motoko's character in the manga and movie brought me face to face with another difference between the two. In the manga, gender is as accidental and incidental as origin, but females are ciphers in the film, as if Oshii has accepted as given that the world of high technology is fated to remain male-created and male-dominated.

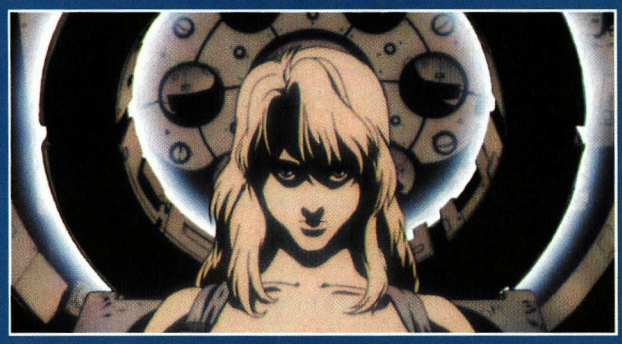


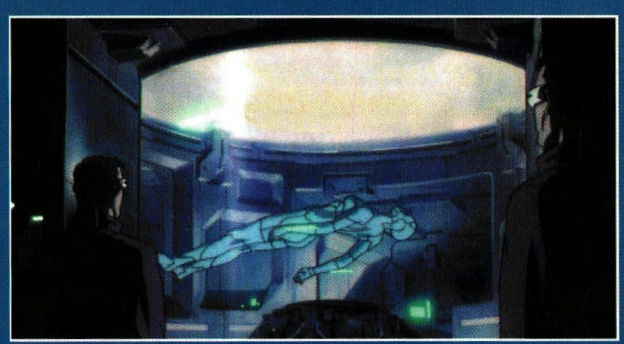
Aramaki's cyborg secretaries are dolls whose sole function is to serve, not even dignified with individual faces; they could easily be as functional as their multi-digit keyboard access devices, so one can only assume that their appearance is geared to their colleagues' wishes. We hear that the men also have a greater or lesser degree of cyber-enhancement, but all the high-maintenance doll-bodies we *see* are female.

Maybe other reviewers will be less disturbed by this than I am. GHOST IN THE SHELL is, after all, a technically stunning movie with a central thesis which has had thinkers and theologians worried since the dawn of consciousness and which may well be the vital intellectual issue of the twenty-first century. Its beauty is astounding. Yet the film catches at the head, not the heart and not the guts - Kawai's score, the most visceral thing about it, is to be altered - and because it catches at the head one looks for it to work on an intellectual, logical level. This means that the holes in the plot gape wide. There's no need for the movie to happen at all because the Puppet Master could simply have contacted Motoko anytime he chose. For a head-movie, it's a surprise to realise that its greatest charms are sensual and not intellectual. Abandon yourself to the seductive beauty of the film and the dazzling skill of the film-makers and it works. Speculate along Shirow's and scriptwriter Ito's fascinating lines of multiple possibility and it works. *Think* about it, in structural terms, and you may be disappointed.

It won't be as big as AKIRA, not because it's not as 'good' as AKIRA, but because it lacks the things that hooked AKIRA into the consciousness of the Western mass media - teenagers, bikes, social unrest, and not-too-heroic yet pivotal figures with whom the majority could identify and through whom each of us can triumph. Again, it's a visceral thing.

GHOST IN THE SHELL quotes from the Bible : "When I was a child, I thought and felt as a child. Now that I am a man, I have put away childish things." Maybe we're just not ready to put away childish things for the pure, cool, beautiful yet not entirely logical consciousness of Oshii's cyberdimension. Maybe we still need our heroes, villains, humour and humanity, limitations and reasons. I am really glad to have had the privilege of seeing this fine film with its original music; but while it's definitely claimed its rightful place among the handful of anime films I most admire, it hasn't moved onto the other list, the films that live in my heart; the ones I call great.





GHOST IN THE SHELL LIVE EVENT

Film promotion in the UK doesn't usually include the kind of live events they run in Japan for a major movie. As well as live events with the voice actors and crew answering questions, the launch of GHOST IN THE SHELL was celebrated with live concerts in Tokyo and Osaka, at which a singer dressed as Motoko Kusanagi performed 'image songs' based on the film. Here's the 'live-action' Motoko in uniform and ready to rock.

HARD BOILED

HONG KONG ACTION MOVIES: WIN THE BOOK!!

Five lucky readers have the chance to own this new book without handing over a penny, because Titan Books have generously given us five copies as competition prizes. To win one, all you have to do is put your name and address on a postcard marked HONG KONG MOVIES and send it to us at ANIME FX, 70 Mortimer Street, London W1N 7DF, UK, to arrive not later than 5th January 1996. The senders of the first five cards drawn out of Helen's hat on that date win the books, so get those postcards out now and enter right away.

WIN GHOSTLY GOODIES!

Our man in Japan, Peter Evans of Sakura Studio, has five GHOST IN THE SHELL t-shirts and fifteen packs of GHOST IN THE SHELL trading cards, courtesy of those kind people at Kodansha. The trading cards have been done for worldwide distribution by TOPPS and they go to the first 15 cards out of the hat on 1st January 1996. Put your name and address on the card and mark it GHOST CARDS.

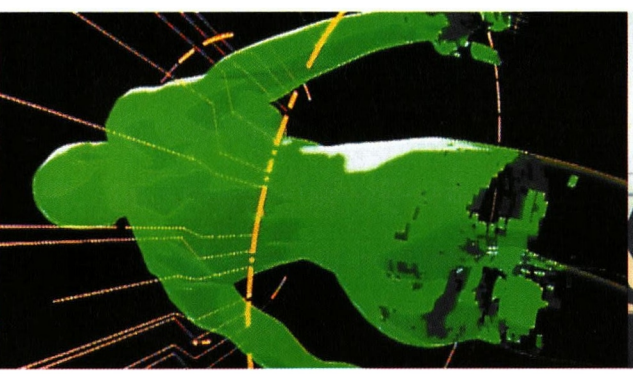
To win a t-shirt, you have to try a little harder. (Well, these ARE the Japanese promo shirts, after all!) Mark your card GHOST SHIRTS and put your name, address and the answers to the three questions below. These are pretty fiendish so if we don't get enough correct answers to all three, two out of three will be acceptable. All correct answers will go into that famous hat on 1st January 1996 and the first five out each get a shirt. And the questions are :

1. What is the name of the project which generated the Puppet Master?
2. Who wrote the original Japanese soundtrack music?
3. What is the name of Mamoru Oshii's dog, who appears briefly in the film?

Send your answers to AFX, 70 Mortimer Street, London W1N 7DF, UK, by 1st January 1996.

Michelle Khan in ROYAL WARRIORS

CONTEST CORNER



HONG GIL DONG

SICAF '95

Seoul International Cartoon and Animation Festival '95

Masaaki Kato visits Korea's first ever animation trade show.

Korea is the third largest animation producing nation in the world, and 30% of the world cartoon movie output is animated there; yet this is the first time a cartoon and animation festival has been held there. Publishing companies, agencies, anime studios, personal computer shops and many other dealers came together - so it wasn't a convention like ANIME AMERICA, AUKcon or COMIKET, but a trade show.

Anime and manga are winning popularity in Korea. At the bookstore, MANGA-MAGAZINE took a counter, and on video the DISNEY display was very conspicuous. Character goods, magazines, OVA's, computer graphics, and other products available in Korea were displayed. Korean-made animation was shown in a special "cartoon cave', while award-winning animation from France, Canada, Japan and Germany had an exhibition area of its own. There was space for multimedia displays, virtual reality, student works and new animators' works.

The International Cartoon Exhibition Pavilion showed 220 works from 15 countries, including China, Croatia, Cyprus and Israel as well as the UK and Japan. All 27 prizewinners from the Angouleme International Cartoon Salon 1974-1995 were shown, as were ten pieces by Osamu Tezuka-sensei. A historical and contemporary exhibition of original art by 78 Korean creators helped to enliven the display even more. In addition, a number of eminent people were invited to attend a symposium on anime and manga arts, because, behind the scenes Korean anime studios support the animation world.

ANIME FX was the only foreign Press represented at SICAF95 apart from cartoon magazine WITTY-WORLD, whose editor, Dr John A. Lent, gave the opening lecture at the symposium. Other distinguished lecturers included French director and editor Jean-Louis Bompoint, Dutch cartoon historian Peter Niewendijk, British director Jessica Langford, and Japan's Takayuki Matsutani, President of Tezuka Production, and ASIFA vice-president Renzo Kinoshita.

Mr. Jeong Gyun, president of the well known anime studio D.R. Movie, gave this adress about the anime industry:

"Thank you for visiting. We are very happy to see you here.
First of all, we are dumbfounded to see so many attendees. Still, there are about a hundred anime studios in the south of Seoul, and about sixty of them are joining in a kind of trade association.

Studios that can handle orders from the U.S. are big companies - with original pictures, animation cels, background paintings, film and so on, they have to be able to manage a big job with a very short time limit for delivery. Japanese studios request very high quality for their works, therefore we have to commit long hours to work. Most of our animation studios get their work as subcontracts from the U.S. and Japan. Ther are a few orders from other countries, but the amount is very low.

Because we are subcontracted, anime fans don't know us. I think there's no-one who knows that most anime cells are made in Korea! The cels for MACROSS PLUS, TOKYO BABYLON, FINAL FANTASY, SLAM DUNK, SAILOR MOON and so on were produced by Korean studios. In other words, "Anime is made in Korea!"(laughs)

Now Japanese animations are finding their way into foreign markets, and our Korean companies are beginning to say that they have underrated the size of the domestic market. In the past, anime an dmanga have been played down, in spite of their popularity. This festival will be very good for the Korean anime market."

Here's a glimpse of some of the latest Korean animation shows and products.

DOOCHY & POOKOO (DAI WON ANIMATION CO.)

1

2

3

4

1- THE MAGIC FLUTE (SEOUL MOVIE CO.)
2 & 3 - RED HAWK (DAI WON ANIMATION CO.)
5 - MY MOMMY IS A MAGICIAN (SEOUL MOVIE CO.)

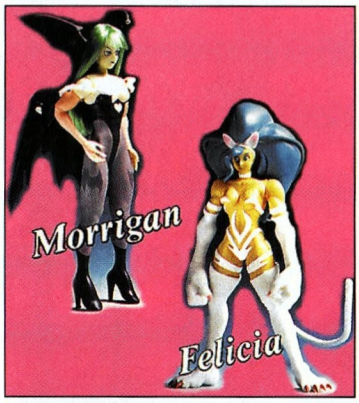
GAMES CAPSULE

by PAUL WATSON

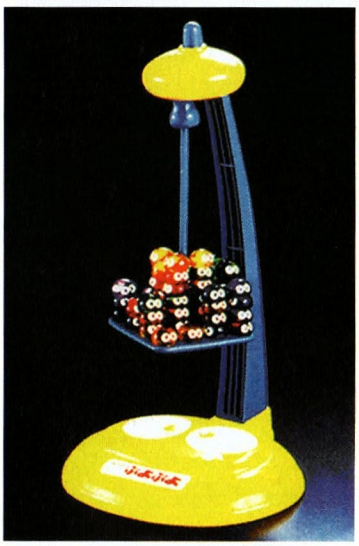
Merchandising is big business in Japan and most anime releases are accompanied by everything from toilet paper to egg cups baring the show's logo and characters. Video games are no exception to this rule and we thought you might like to take a glimpse at some of the things hardcore Japanese gameplayers will be getting in their Christmas stockings this year.

Namco's Tekken Two characters go to pieces, literally, with this selection of 200 piece jigsaw puzzles featuring computer generated portraits of Nina Williams and Heiachi among others.

No stationary set would be complete without this amazingly cute Yoshi's Island notepad. Useful for writing in those cheats and level codes.



Keeping in touch with a game player's needs, these "fully poseable" dolls based on Capcom's Vampire Hunter coin-op would be welcome in any gamer's stocking. I'll have Felicia please.



Compile's ever popular puzzle game Puyo Puyo makes the jump from video game to reality with the release of this buckaroo-type game. Players pick cards and then balance the Puyos pictured onto the scale. Like Buckaroo, this goes on until the whole lot take a tumble. Unfortunately, just like the game itself, this highly amusing toy will probably remain in Japan.

Soft toys are very popular in Japan so it is no surprise to hear that a variety of them are based on game characters. Virtua Fighter, Toh Shin Den and Donkey Kong Country are just a small sample of the toys available. How cute!

If owning Donkey Kong just isn't enough for you then why not be him with this fetching set of novelty pyjamas. Available in either Diddy Kong or Donkey Kong styles, each lives in a cosy barrel case when not in use. Guaranteed simian fun.

Well there you go then-a fine selection of game related goodies that'll be thrilling the pants off kids all over Japan on the 25th. Bring on the day when this level of merchandising becomes popular in the west. I can imagine it now; a Doom duvet set!

●

With the release of Sega's Saturn and Sony's Playstation, the video gaming world is now awaiting the entrant of the other big player in the game Nintendo. Nintendo's Ultra 64 has been touted as the next generation machine to bury all others with its reliance on cartridge technology over CD Rom and some incredible demo sequences doing the rounds. Nintenedo plan to release their 64bit machine at a reasonable cost too (although no price has been announced as of yet) causing many people to wonder how they can possibly release a machine so powerful yet keep it in competition with the other machines on the market. The fact that the demos seen so far have all been run on expensive Silicon Graphics machines labours this point further.

Still, things are moving along now and November 25-26 sees the Makuhari Messe convention centre being home to Famicom Spaceworld 95 at which more will be revealed. Attendees to the show will fill in a questionnaire that will then put them into a draw for one of 300 Nintendo 64s (as it's known in Japan) and software. Whether this will cause many sceptics to eat humble pie remains to be seen though as Nintendo have yet to release any actual software screenshots or demos.

Despite the lack of software images to tease the public, Nintendo have revealed what the 64 will actually look like and the finished article is more or less identical to the model displayed in America earlier in the year with only minor cosmetic changes. The system's layout is fairly similar to the Super Nintendo, with the cartridge port on the top centre, the power switch on the left, reset button on the right and the eject button in the middle. One major difference though is the inclusion of four joypad ports, making multi player games a reality without the use of a multi-tap. Bringing a multi-tap into the picture could make for some very interesting multi player games indeed making Hudsonsoft's Bomberman Super Hi Ten a plausible reality.

The control pad shape is similar in design to the Playstation with the inclusion of a central grip making it look a bit like a claw. As you can see, the directional pad is on the left and six buttons are present on the right, but Nintendo have also decided to include a small thumb-operated joystick in the middle. How this is going to be incorporated into game play is yet to be revealed, but the shape of the pad means that either using the directional pad or the thumb stick should be reasonably comfortable. The rear of the Joypad also conceals a small cartridge port but the purpose of this is yet to be revealed.

This is how the machine should look when revealed (with software) at the SpaceWorld show in November, with any changes being cosmetic. The Nintendo 64 logo has yet to be finalised but the one shown here may well be the final version. As is to be expected, gamers outside of Japan will have to wait until '96 before they get a chance to try out the system first hand.

FINAL FANTASY DEMO

To give an impression of the power of the Nintendo 64 various SG demonstrations have been shown. One of particular interest was based on characters from the excellent RPG Final Fantasy VI (Final Fantsy 3 in the US). In the five minute demonstration, Locke, Tina and Shadow take on a stone giant. Tina wades in with her sword followed by Shadow who throws the giant to the ground. Locke then launches a fireball attack causing impressive damage. Tina then summons Bahamuut inflicting major damage upon the giant before finishing it off with a mega flare. The demo certainly looks amazing but we'll have to wait to see if this will be video game reality.

サザンアイズ 3×3 EYES

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE ....

In 1988, *Young Weekly Magazine* commenced publishing an adventure-romance by a young cartoonist called Yuzo Takada. It started in Tokyo, moved to Hong Kong, then further into Asia, to China and Tibet, as immortal being Pai, last of the eternally youthful Sanjiyan Unkara, and undead schoolboy Yakumo searched for the secret that would make Pai a real human girl.

The manga was so popular that this summer, seven years on, collected volume 18 appeared; total sales to date are over 18 million copies, or a million copies per volume. Takada's work (which also includes BLUE SEED and BANNOU BUNKA NEKO MUSUME, animated and released in the UK as CATGIRL NUKUNUKU) is so admired that in 1993 he won the 17th Kodansha Cartoon Prize. But before this, in 1991, the manga was animated as a four-part OAV series, sales for which totalled over 200,000 tapes and laserdiscs in Japan alone. A successful Western release followed.

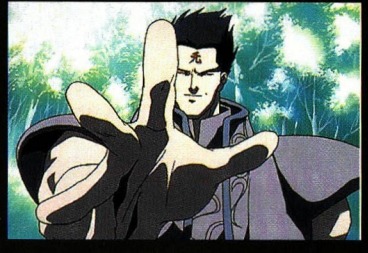
The first 3 x 3 EYES OAV series ended on a note of sadness; Pai, realising that she was only bringing danger and trouble to her friends, left Yakumo in Hong Kong while she went in search of her destiny. Yakumo, still a zombie, bearing the sign WU on his forehead to indicate his inability to die, has searched for her ever since. The two of them have come to mean a great deal to each other, and Yakumo knows that the forces of evil are ranged against Pai and her quest to cease to exist as the last of the Sanjiyan Unkara and become just another mortal teenager.

The new series commences 4 years after the last one closed - this is also the real-time lapse between the release of the two series. It comprises three 45-minute OAVs entitled SAZAN EYES ; SEIMA DENSETSU (3 x 3 EYES : HOLY DEMON LEGEND), and although the lead seiyuu, Megumi Hayashibara as Pai and Koshi Tsujitani as Yakumo, are the same, the other cast and staff are all newcomers to the story.

STORY SYNOPSIS

Pai is living under the name of Pai Ayanokoji in Shibuya, Tokyo, leading the life of a normal Japanese high school girl. She has completely forgotten her past in Tibet, how she came to Japan, her time with Yakumo, and that she was ever a Sanjiyan Unkara. She and Yakumo had discovered that an evil power, Kaiyawan, had brought about the destruction of all her kind, and she had gone to fight its servant, Benares. Has she achieved her dream yet? Is she really a normal human girl? We are about to find out ...

While she's walking with her classmates a young vagrant calls after her in the street. It's Yakumo, but Pai doesn't recognise him; she's frightened and runs away. Suddenly, her servant, the demon who used to live in her staff, appears, and she's



EYES

even more terrified and faints.

While she's unconscious she has a strange dream. She dreams of the destruction of her people by a man with the WU symbol on his head; it is Benares. She shouts at his master, threatening that she will make him pay for what he has done one day, when she has the 'holy power'. Then she wakes, and finds herself in bed in her own room.

Downstairs, her grandparents, her classmates Ken-Ken and Dan-chan, and Yakumo, are waiting for her to awake. There are quite a number of dolls in the house. Her grandparents tell Yakumo that four years ago, in Hong Kong, Pai and her parents were involved in a car accident. Her parents, both doll-makers, were killed; Pai survived, but she has completely lost her memory of the accident and her life before then. Her grandfather asks Yakumo and the girls to stay the night.

Going onto the balcony, Pai finds Yakumo. She realises that he seems to know something about her past, and asks him to tell her about it. As he begins to speak, the dolls attack. The evil spirit Kaiyawan is at work; afraid of her hidden powers, he has sealed Pai's memories away, implanted false memories in her 'grandparents', and set the dolls, really demons in disguise, to guard her. They take control of her 'grandparents' and her schoolfriends, and Yakumo is suddenly under attack and hard pressed to defend himself without hurting the girls and the old couple.

Pai still doesn't understand what is going on. Then the leading doll, a demon named Lady, stabs Yamuko in the chest with a sword. Pai screams, and it seems as though a seal on her forehead is suddenly broken.

Later, Pai has recovered her memories, but her 'life' as a normal schoolgirl is destroyed, and she and Yakumo set out together once more. They have learned that the gates of the Sanjiyan homeworld are hidden in a mysterious underground shrine, and armed with the records of a famous treasure hunter, MacDonald, they hope to get there before the evil Benares and his legions of demons destroy it beyond recognition.

Helped by the aged head of a monastery, who gives them directions and advice, they think they have found the great cavern that leads to the underground shrine. But one of Benares' servants is already there, casting a spell to destroy the shrine. In the battle that follows, Pai fights to defend Yakumo, while he will do anything to protect his beloved Pai.

We have to wait until next year to learn how this part of Pai's journey will end. The 3 x 3 EYES manga and first OAV series have fans all over the world who are eagerly awaiting the next chapter of her adventures.

STAFF

ORIGINAL STORY **Yuzo Takada**
DIRECTOR **Kazuhisa Takenouchi**
CHARA DESIGN/ART DIRECTOR
Hiroshi Kato (St. Bimine)
PHOTOGRAPHIC DIRECTOR
Hidetoshi Watanabe (T.Nishimura)
MUSIC **Kaoru Wada**
COLOURING **Kazuko Takeuchi**
BACKGROUNDS **St. Bimine**
FILM **T. Nishimura**
ANIME PRODUCTION HOUSE
Tabak & Studio Junio
MANUFACTURE & RELEASE
Kodansha, Bandai Visual, King Record

CAST

YAKUMO FUJII **Koshi Tsujitani**
PAI AYANOKOJI
MegumiHayashibara
BENARES **Akio Otsuka**
OLD MONK
(headmaster of the monastery)
Ryuji Kai

NAPARUPA (pupil)
Einen Hayashi
DAN-CHAN (Pai's friend)
Michie Tomizawa
KEN-KEN (Pai's friend)
Junko Hagimori
PAI's GRANDFATHER
Yukihei Miyauchi
PAI'S GRANDMOTHER
Shoko Takamura
BOSS DOLL, LADY
Maria Kawamura

RELEASE DATES

OAVs
Vol 1, MATSURIN NO SHO (Book of Deification) 25th July 1995
Vol 2, KAGI NO SHO - (Book of the Key) Autumn 95
Vol 3, KIKAN NO SHO - (Book of the suspicious man) Spring 96

CD ALBUM
3 x 3 EYES, SEIMA DENSETSU - 5th July 1995 on KING RECORD

PAST TO PRESENT

MANGA IN FOCUS SPECIAL FEATURE by Jim Swallow

In this MANGA IN FOCUS special feature we take a look back at the one hundred and forty-plus translated Far Eastern manga that have appeared in the West since the 'manga boom' of 1987-88. The majority of these books are either on sale now, or still available in back-issue comic shops.

ANTARCTIC PRESS were formed in 1985, and are best known for their NINJA HIGH SCHOOL pseudomanga titles, but in 1991 they began translating manga with the parody STAR TREKKER. More recent translations have been VAMPIRE MIYU and ICZER ONE (from the anime series) HURRICANE GIRLS, GOJIN, F-II BANDIT, SILBUSTER, FANTASTIC PANIC!, DODEKAIN, CHANGE COMMANDER GOKU, CANVAS DIARY, MIGHTY BOMBSHELLS and STAINLESS STEEL ARMADILLO. Antarctic also handle adult manga in their *Venus* imprint, including BONDAGE FAIRIES, VANITY ANGEL, EMBLEM, AMAZING STRIP and BATTLE BINDER PLUS.

BLAST BOOKS specialise in softcover compilations of controversial manga material with horrific and violent content. Available on import, their range includes HELL BABY, MR. ASAHI'S AMAZING FREAK SHOW and PANORAMA OF HELL.

BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING's children's books imprint have recent arrived as a manga publisher with their release of Takeshi Maekawa's kung-fu saga IRONFIST CHINMI. Published unflipped in its original format, CHINMI has six softcover volumes with more to come; Bloomsbury hope to release further titles in 1996.

DARK HORSE COMICS' manga translations are produced in partnership with Studio Proteus, and have formed a large part of this independent comic publisher's repertoire for several years. Dark Horse's material is usually in the form of miniseries, with occasional longer 'maxiseries' like THE VENUS WARS and OUTLANDERS. Their range includes the later APPLESEED volumes, the APPLESEED DATABOOK, GODZILLA, GHOST IN THE SHELL, DOMU : A CHILD'S DREAM, THE LEGEND OF MOTHER SARAH, OH! MY GODDESS, ORION, THE REBEL SWORD, VERSION, HELLHOUNDS, GUNSMITH CATS, DOMINION and CARAVAN KIDD. Dark Horse has also serialised manga in its DARK HORSE PRESENTS anthology title with DEMON, as well as regularly producing softcover compilations of popular works.

ECLIPSE COMICS ceased publication in the early 90s, after producing early landmark works like AREA 88, XENON, THE DAGGER OF KAMUI, and MAI THE PSYCHIC GIRL, before they were taken over by Viz Communications, and the first couple of APPLESEED series, BLACK MAGIC, CYBER 7, the two WHAT'S MICHAEL collections, and LOST CONTINENT. Several of Eclipse's series were republished as collected volumes.

EPIC COMICS' connection with manga traces back to their publication of a colour Go Nagai strip, ONI, in EPIC MAGAZINE in the early 80s. In recent years, a colorised version of Katsuhiro Otomo's AKIRA, and one-shot specials of his stories MEMORIES and FAREWELL TO WEAPONS, have also been released. The AKIRA adaptation went on hiatus for a period in the early 90s, but has just recently returned to complete the thirty-seven part series.

EQUINOX MANGA is a division of Mandarin Press, publishing a series of softcover manga compilation volumes, favouring the work of Katsuhiro Otomo; to date, editions of AKIRA (first volume), DOMU and MEMORIES are on sale, as well as the wordless dinosaur story GON.

FIRST COMICS are no longer publishing, but during the manga boom years they were responsible for producing one of the most important series in the field, LONE WOLF AND CUB, a lengthy period drama about a samurai and his ward in feudal Japan. In addition, First's graphic novel line released an all-painted version of Go Nagai's MAZINGER story.

GRAPHIC VISIONS is the comics publishing arm of US anime video distributor A.D. Vision, who started their stable this year with a number of adult manga, including THE GIRL FROM PHANTASIA, The S.W.E.E.T. COP, DRAGON PINK and MAGICAL TWILIGHT. Because of the 'mature readers' content, many large comic shops may not carry the Graphic Visions line.

INNOVATION COMICS' single manga title was a five-issue adaptation by translators Studio Proteus of the mystic adventure series 3 x 3 EYES. The licence on the series has since reverted and Dark Horse, in association with Studio Proteus, have reprinted the Innovation series in a paperback collection before continuing with 3 x 3 EYES : CURSE OF THE GESU, another five-issue miniseries.

JADEMAN COMICS, NEW COMICS GROUP and EASTERN COMICS are responsible for the Cantonese manga on sale in the UK, although in recent years the sale of Chinese-origin comics has largely gone back from comic shops to Chinese book and AV stores. The majority of the Cantonese books are martial-arts-themed, usually with a mystical element, mostly in colour; Jademan's TRICKSTER KING MONKEY, DRUNKEN FIST, THE FORCE OF THE BUDDHA'S PALM, THE GATES OF THE NIGHT, JADEMAN COLLECTION, IRON MARSHAL, ORIENTAL HEROES, THE BLOOD SWORD and BLOOD SWORD DYNASTY, N.C.G.'s YOUNG MASTER and Eastern's THE FORBIDDEN KINGDOM, THE WILD and BLACKJACK, are all examples that appeared on comic shelves during the early manga boom.

PENGUIN BOOKS, although not a comics publisher, deserve a mention in this feature for their publication of Keiji Nakazawa's seminal anti-war manga BAREFOOT GEN, a no-punches-pulled account of the Hiroshima atomic bombing and its aftermath, patterned after Nakazawa's own experiences. Available in some specialist comic shops, and through most large bookstores, BAREFOOT GEN is published in large squarebound volumes. It also holds the distinction of being the first manga ever translated into English. Another Hiroshima story by Nakazawa, I SAW IT, was published as a one-shot comic under the Educomics imprint.

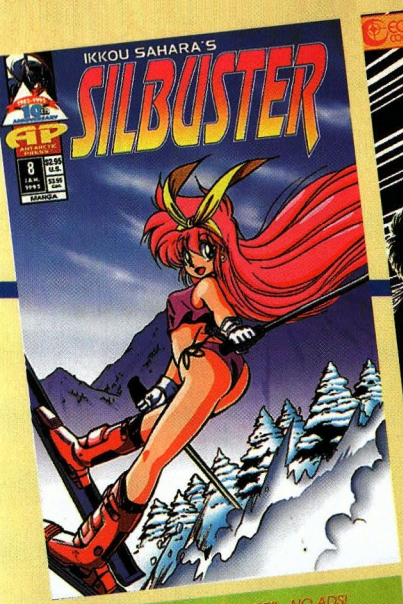
SUN COMIC PUBLISHING dropped from the manga scene around 1992/3, but not before publishing a few less well-known action titles like RAIKA, HIGH SCHOOL AGENT and RAGNAROK GUY. Other works like MECHANIC GEMINI and SONIC DESERTER were solicited but never appeared.

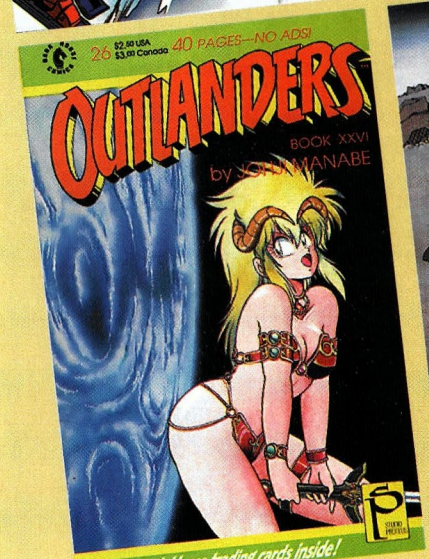
VEROTIK is a relative newcomer to the translated manga market. Their sole publication to date is an ongoing series adapting Go Nagai's notorious DEVILMAN. This book carries a 'mature readers' stamp, so finding it in the UK may be difficult.

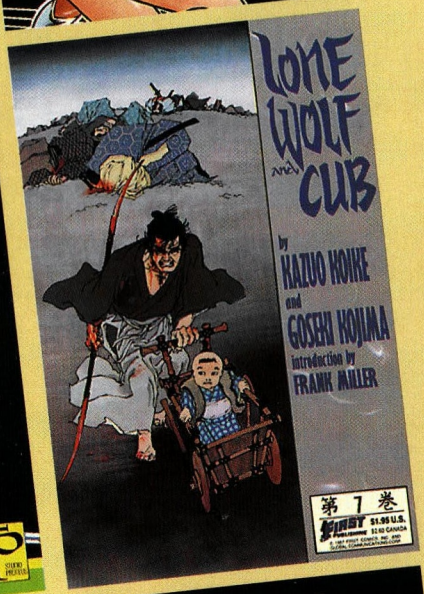
VIZ COMMUNICATIONS is by far the largest manga translator, backed up by Japanese published Shogakukan, its parent company. Viz's product is largely in the form of miniseries, with serialisations in their ANIMERICA magazine (AREA 88, LUM, AD POLICE, ONE POUND GOSPEL, CRIMSON PIG etc) and MANGA VIZION anthology (RUMIC THEATER, OGRE SLAYER, SAMURAI CRUSADER). Their range includes popular books like NAUSICAA OF THE VALLEY OF THE WIND, SANCTUARY, MAISON IKKOKU, BATTLE ANGEL ALITA, THE GUYVER, STREETFIGHTER II, GREY, GUNHED, FIST OF THE NORTH STAR, RANMA 1/2, COBRA, CRYING FREEMAN, SILENT MOBIUS, LUM : URUSEI YATSURA, HOROBI, JUSTY, MACROSS II and GENOCYBER, as well as others perhaps less well-known to the general reader, like LYCANTHROPE LEO, 2001 NIGHTS, STRIKER, RIOT, PINEAPPLE ARMY, ULTRAMAN CLASSIC, PIXY JUNKET, GOKU, THE PROFESSIONAL, BAOH and the MERMAID series. There are also *shojo* (girls') titles like PROMISE, A A PRIME, X/1999 and THEY WERE 11, and collected volumes and graphic novels including HOTEL HARBOUR VIEW, SHION, THE CHRONICLES OF STARGAZER, SABER TIGER, Osamu Tezuka's classic ADOLF, and game-based stories like LEGEND OF ZELDA and SUPER MARIO BROS.

If your local (US or UK) comic store doesn't have any of these books in stock, they can order many of them from their regular distributor or via PREVIEWS or ADVANCE COMICS. Older titles turn up in back issue racks in shops and comic marts. Viz Communications run a mail order service for all their products, VIZ SHOP-BY-MAIL - details in the current issue of ANIMERICA or MANGA VIZION.

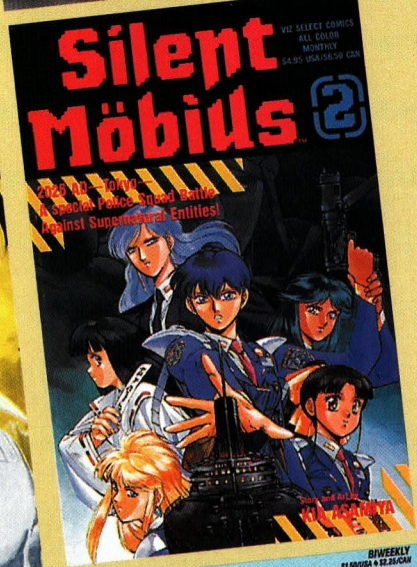
AUTHOR'S NOTE : While every effort has been made to make this list a comprehensive one, errors and omissions may have crept in - any additions are welcomed.

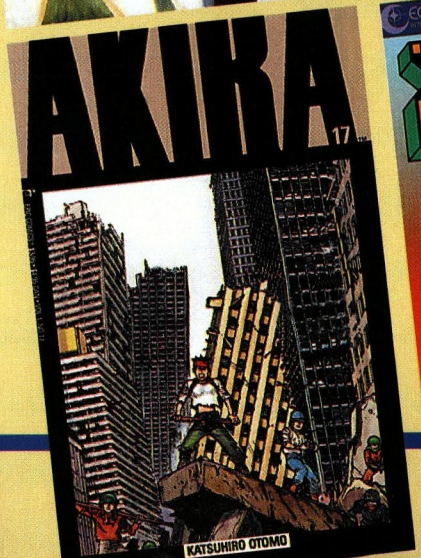






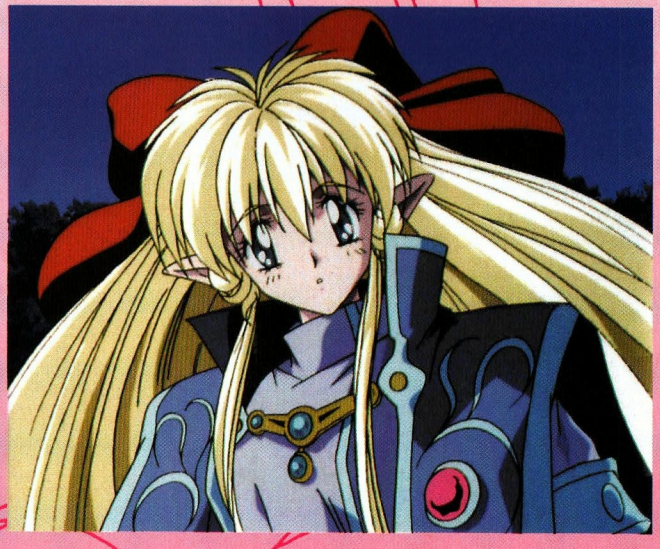
Dark Horse trading cards inside!

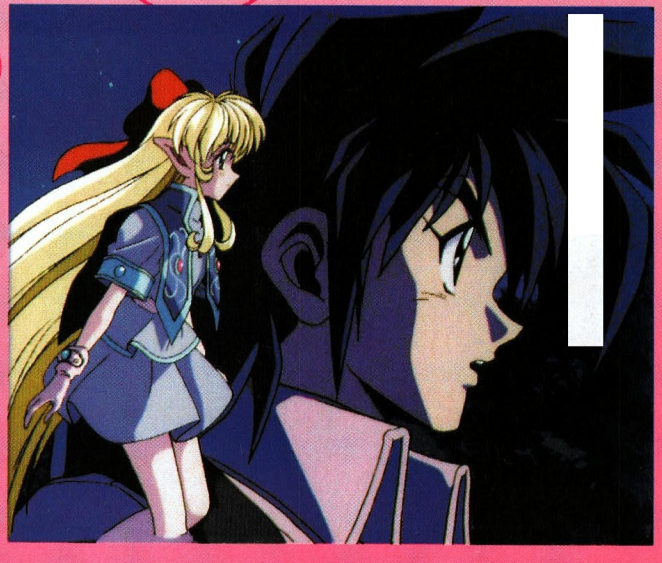




LUM: Urusei Yatsura
© Rumiko Takahashi/
Shogakukan Inc./ Viz
Communications

Fairy





FAIRY PRINCESS REINE is an action-adventure comedy OAV by KSS. Vols 1 & 2 were released on 27th October 1995, with further volumes to follow. Each runs 30 minutes.

The kanji of the title can be read YOSEI HIME REINE or YOSEI KI REINE; the meaning remains the same.

Princess Reine

PRINCIPAL CAST

REINE CHU BANU COURAS	**Miki Takahashi**
REEN CHAMY KU	**Aya Hisakawa**
GO TAKARADA	**Koichi Yamadera**
MARI YUMENOKATA	**Satomi Korogi**
MIZUKI, NATSUKI & HARUKI TAKARADA	**Rie Iwatsubo**
TAKUMA ZENSHUIN	**Hiro Horikawa**

STAFF

DIRECTOR and STORYBOARDS
Ryotaro Daichi (AKAZUKIN CHACHA,NURSE ANGEL LILIKA) and **Kazuya Tanaka**
SCREENPLAY **Hitoshi Yamazaki**
CHARA and MECHA DESIGN **Toshihide Sotodate**
ART DIRECTOR **Kenichi Harada**
ANIME DIRECTOR **Akio Saito**

BACKGROUND

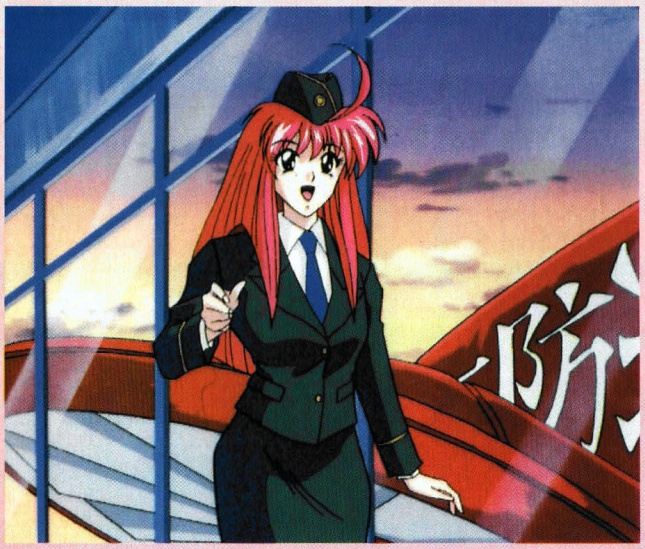
Kurakama is an ancient city with a long history; it's hidden a dark secret for many years, and now that secret is about to come to the fore.

The Yumenokata Corporation has invested heavily in the city, and plans to develop it as a huge amusement park. The ancient temples are now side by side with modern buildings, and the Corporation's JetCoaster Salamander Project team is working on plans to build a huge rollercoaster in the park. But is that all they're after? The Kurakama Fire Defense Agency are not at all sure that all this development is a good thing; they're worried about safety standards, and about the disruption that largescale development can bring to a small place without the facilities to cope.

Teenager Go Takarada, regarded by everyone in town (especially his three sisters!) as a loafer and ne'er-do-well, used to laze about reading, until he picked up what he thought was an old novel one day. It was actually an ancient grimoire and what he read in its crumbling pages convinced him that there was something exciting and precious to be found in Kurakama, and transformed him into a treasure hunter. To everyone else, it seems there's no such thing as treasure in Kurakama, despite its ancient monuments, but Go thinks otherwise. And when he discovers that the Yumenokata Corporation headquarters is close to a possible treasure site, he starts to get even more curious.

Go's life is about to get very, very complicated. An incredibly cute little fairy - yes, a real live fairy - appears before him. Her name is Reine and she tells him that she's come from another, alternate reality in search of the Four Hearts, four gemstones which can bring peace to her troubled homeland of Panyora. Rumours that the magical Salamander Jewel is located near Go's sleepy hometown of Kurakama have reached her world and she's here to look for clues as to its whereabouts. She meant to come alone, but things are never quite that simple. A wicked

Left to right: GO TAKARADA, REEN, MARI YUMENOKATA



little witch-fairy, Reen, has followed her into our world to work mischief, and magical mayhem is sure to follow as the two cute creatures do battle.

All those involved are going to find that nothing is entirely as it seems. The Fire Defence Agency and its Captain will have their worst fears confirmed, though not quite in the way they imagine. The Yumenokata Corporation will find it has bitten off more than it can chew - a salamander is, after all, a big, dangerous, firebreathing lizard of very uncertain temper! Go's sisters will see that their crazy little brother has hidden depths, and maybe one or two of them will find love as well. Go will learn to believe a backpack can fly, play Indiana Jones for real, and face more action, danger and sheer comic insanity than he ever knew his old home town could contain. Maybe even his classmate Mari, a hopeless daydreamer, will find some of her dreams are within reach. Reine and Reen have come to Kurakama, and they're taking everyone on an out-of-this-world adventure.

Do you believe in fairies? You will after seeing FAIRY PRINCESS REINE

CHARACTERS

GO TAKARADA

He looks like just another high-school kid, and doesn't have the best reputation; there's no harm in him but people call him a 'typical otaku' and a 'hot-headed moron'. His father's a respected classical scholar and sometimes despairs of him! His main interests are reading and model-making; ever since he read this strange old book, he's been dreaming about being a great treasure hunter in a mysterious magical land, but he never bargained on the arrival of a living doll, a real live fairy princess!

REINE

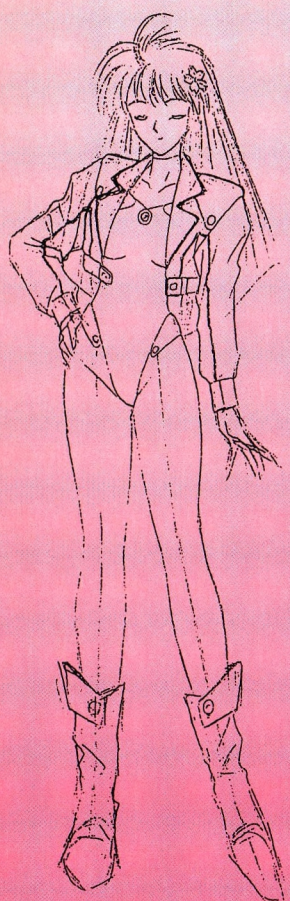
Princess of Panyora, a world in a parallel universe, she has come to earth to find the Four Hearts, magical gems that will help restore peace and harmony to her world. She's very cute and sweet, but the people of the human world seem very strange to her. The feeling is mutual ...

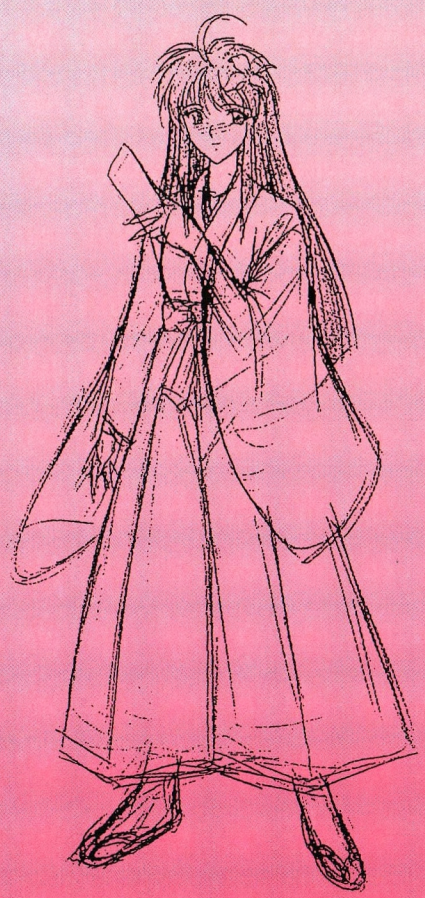
REEN

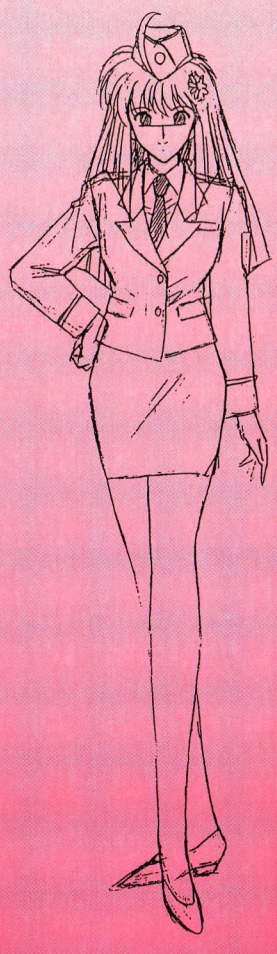
A sorceress of Panyora, she follows the Princess into our world. She starts out with an inbuilt advantage - she already speaks the language of humankind (which is, of course, Japanese). her other advantage is that she's just as cute as Reine - but beware! The loveliest pearls are born of pain and irritation, and Reen is certainly a pearl ...

MARI YUMENOKATA

Notice the surname? Mari-chan is Go's classmate and she has a very soft spot for him, always trying to help him out. She daydreams of becoming a treasure hunter too, but somehow things never seem to work out for her in real life. Will she







ever be able to impress Go?

THE TAKARADA SISTERS

HARUKI

Her name means *Spring Princess* and she works for Takuma Zenshuin on **The Project** at the Yumenokata Corporation. She looks like a cool, competent, dedicated career woman, but she will keep chasing after unsuspecting men. This tendency gets worse when her sister Natsuki fancies them too - sibling rivalry rears its head and the cool career woman becomes a very dangerous adversary!

MIZUKI

The *Water Princess* works as an office lady at Yumenokata Corporation, but she moonlights as a sorceress at the local shrine on her days off. She's a girl with traditional interests - as well as witchcraft, she loves the martial arts and is a very accomplished fighter. She's a deadly hand with the naginata, or pole-arm, a weapon favoured by female fighters throughout Japanese history. As befits her martial arts training she is very reserved, a woman of few words who prefers to let her actions speak for her.

NATSUKI

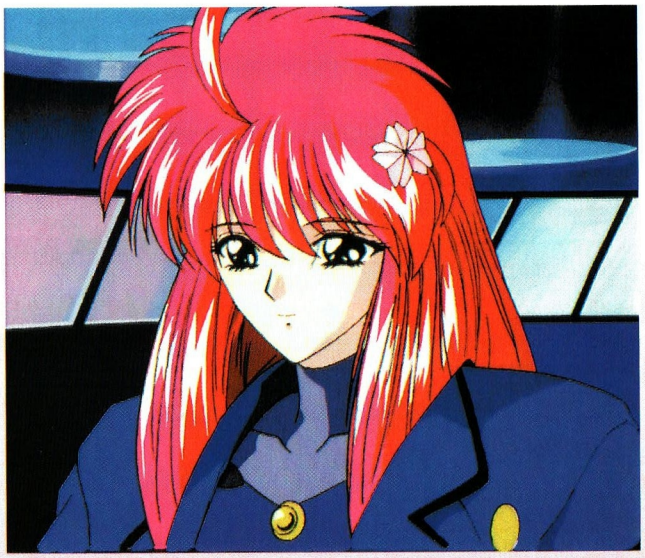
Very beautiful, and very well aware of that fact, the *Summer Princess* also has a very short temper - a fact which everyone else is very well aware of! Like her sisters she works at the Yumenokata Corporation. She's in the Safety Promotion Department. Sometimes a job is just made for a person, and this one - well, isn't. Not for Natsuki anyway. In her spare time she fights her sister Haruki over men.

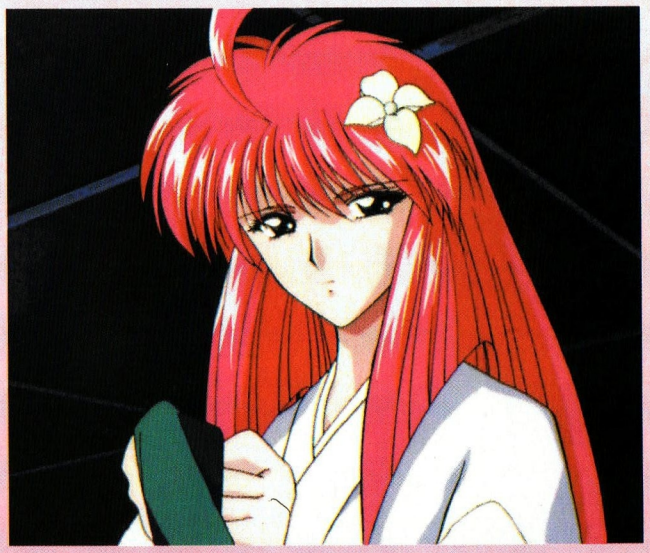
TAKUMA ZENSHUIN

The Yumenokata Corporation hatchet-man, and a pivotal figure in the ongoing **Project**, this cool, handsome and intelligent senior executive is really quite shy. He has terrible trouble communicating with others. Only Haruki can really understand what he's talking about. Naturally this means that they have a very special relationship; Takuma himself hasn't yet realised just how special!

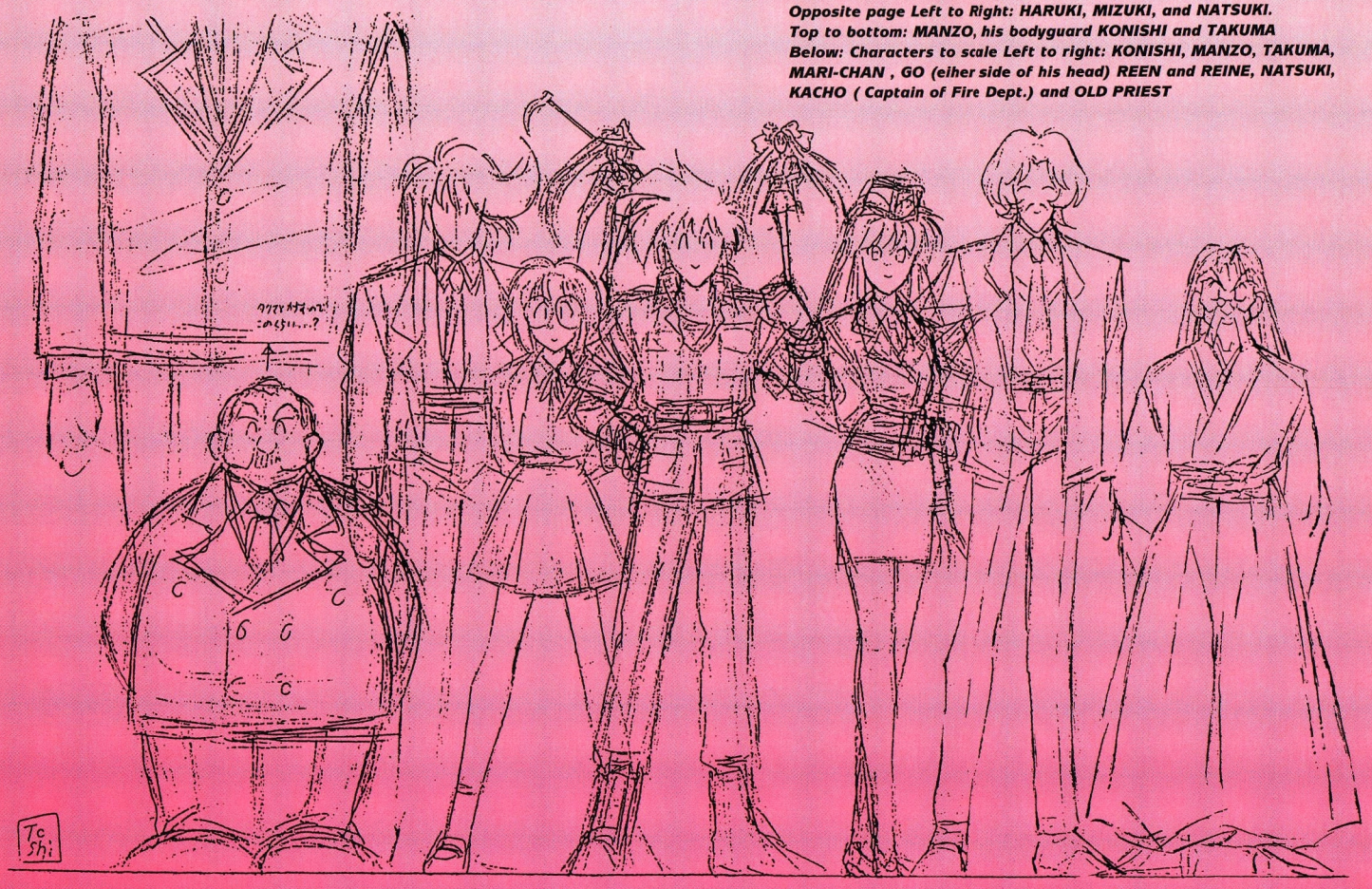
MANZO YUMENOKATA

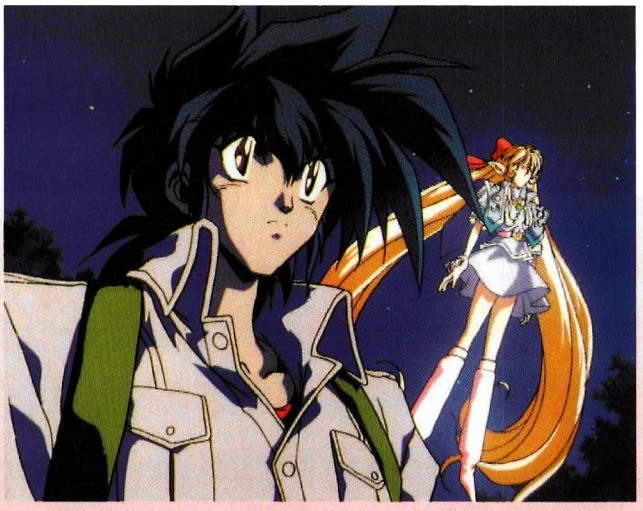
The head of the Yumeonkata Corporation, Mr. Yumenokata is a very respected figure in the community. He's extremely wealthy, employs many people and seems to be dedicated to bringing prosperity to Kamakura as well as to his own company. But is he entirely above board? Go certainly thinks it's odd that, in a town where there's no record of any treasure ever having been found, his company HQ is right by the alleged site of a treasure hoard. Is the JetCoaster Salamander Project **really** just about building a bigger, faster, scarier white-knuckle ride - or is it a cover for something far more fantastic than a theme park attraction? Manzo Yumenokata has plenty of secrets - but he's also in for some surprises when the fairies come to town!

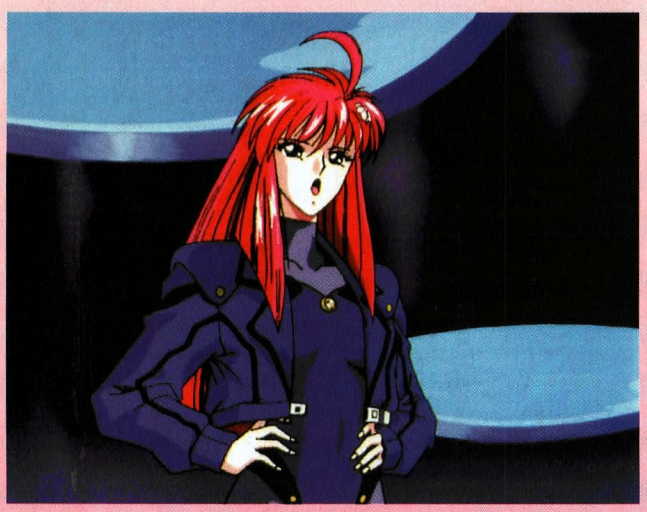


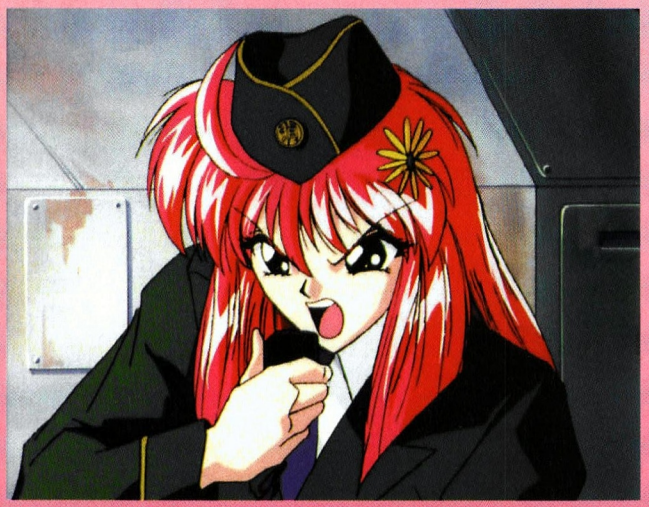


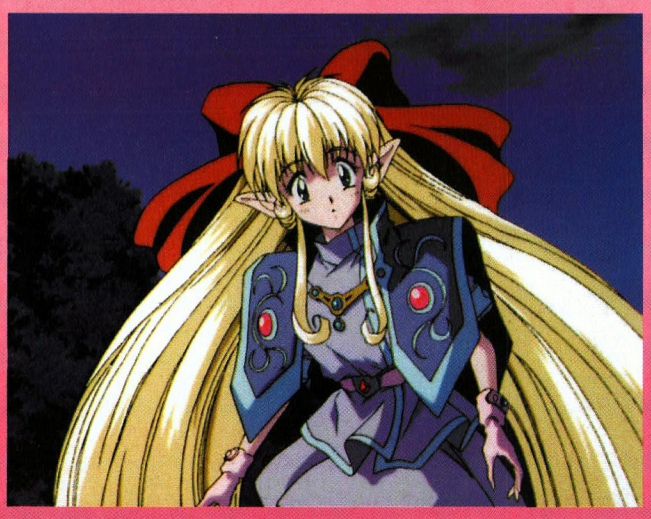
Opposite page Left to Right: HARUKI, MIZUKI, and NATSUKI. Top to bottom: MANZO, his bodyguard KONISHI and TAKUMA Below: Characters to scale Left to right: KONISHI, MANZO, TAKUMA, MARI-CHAN , GO (eiher side of his head) REEN and REINE, NATSUKI, KACHO (Captain of Fire Dept.) and OLD PRIEST











KSS have recently produced a whole string of bright, charming OAVs in which magic has a powerful impact on everyday life, and FAIRY PRINCESS REINE looks like continuing the trend. It's a bit of a departure for senior director Ryotaro Daichi after his TV stints on AKAZUKIN CHACHA and NURSE ANGEL LILIKA; he's used to handling comedy, but the action-adventure elements of the series will give him a chance to show another side of his talents. As for the seiyuu, many of them have spent so much time working together of late that it's almost as if KSS is building up a 'repertory company' of voice actors they can use in a huge range of productions, rather like British studio Hammer or American director Roger Corman did for their own films in the 70s!

This OAV is pure, light-hearted entertainment; it isn't trying to change society or deliver any heavy message, just to provide thirty minutes of fun. If anyone doubts the sheer diversity of anime, just reflect that in this issue alone we've mentioned new titles as different as this fantasy OAV, the movie GHOST IN THE SHELL, the TV soap series GOJINKO MONOGATARI and a host of others. FAiRY PRINCESS REINE is the lighter side of a marvellously varied medium - enjoy it!

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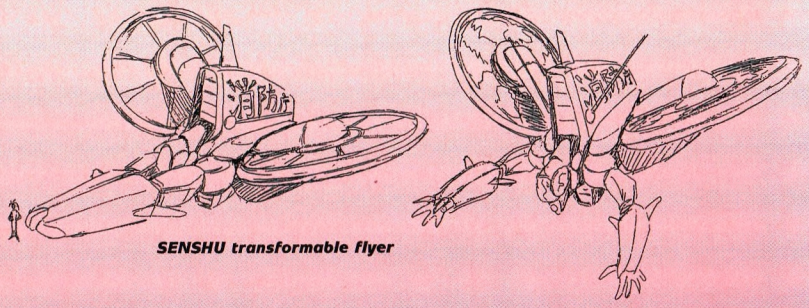
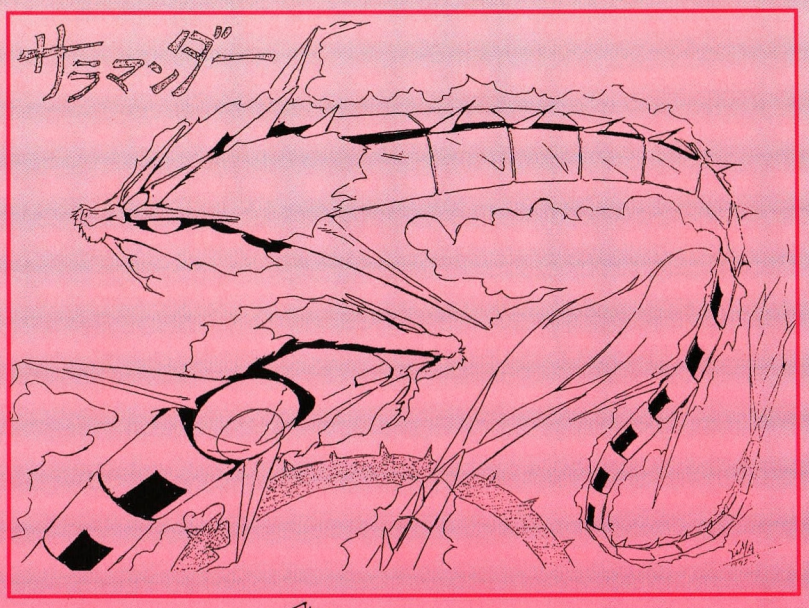
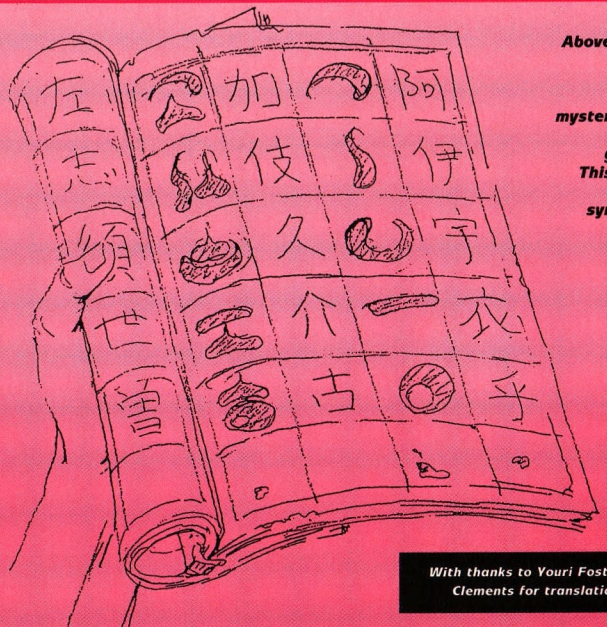


SENSHU transformable flyer





Above: SALAMANDER

Left: GRIMOIRE - The mysterious book which leads GO on his great adventure. This page helps you translate arcane symbols into Kanji.

With thanks to Youri Foster and Jonathan Clements for translation assistance

The ReConTanimeTed Diary of Robert Lyn Davies

Aged: (errr... no way am I telling you that!)

A personal report on the fourth Birmingham anime convention, 3rd - 5th November 1995.

Once again I made my annual pilgrimage to all that is good about anime fandom. For the second year running it was held in the Grand Hotel, Birmingham.

FRIDAY

Aaaaaaargh - the morning of a con is always so hectic. It's a few hours of frenetic activity trying to make sure that I'm taking everything needed apart from myself. Fortunately it's followed by a couple of hours on a train. Phew, last chance for a rest.

Birmingham: the Grand Hotel is so centrally located that it's very easy to find. Sure, I made one or two wrong turns on the short trek from New Street Station but nothing serious. The hotel itself has a deceptively small frontage. You go in thinking that it can't possibly be big enough to house a major anime convention. Wrong! The inside opens up to be of TARDIS like proportions; it is in fact a wonderful venue. I wasn't the first to arrive and was almost immediately set upon by old friends who were lounging around on the lobby's comfortable sofas waiting to see who arrived next. The convention had started; YATTAAAA!

Registration was well organised, and the con package included perhaps the best produced 'Birmingham' convention book yet and an absolutely adorable Ryo-oh-ki membership badge, plus of course booklets containing details of the video and non video programs - wonderful stuff. The rest of Friday afternoon was spent chatting to people, discovering that my room was big enough to be measured in astronomical units and wandering around Birmingham city centre.

With the arrival of night-time came my first (and only!) anime of the con in the form of Armitage III, which was very well received. I have a suspicion that Pioneer are going to have a bit of hit on their hands if fan reaction is anything to go by.

SATURDAY

*ReConTanimeTed opened officially on Friday, but Saturday was the undeniable high point of the weekend. All the best events took place on this day, and it's the only point in a weekend con where mundane thoughts do not intrude. Saturday existed only for the indulgence in and enjoyment of anime and anime fandom. It started with a convention breakfast, aka stuffing down as much as possible in order to forget about eating later on. The hotel foolishly laid on a buffet breakfast to assist in this ritual. Itadakimasu!!! * (yelled in a high pitched voice).*

Of course the real highlight of Saturday morning was the opening of the dealers' room. Imagine the scene if you will: at the top of a flight of stairs are some double doors. On one side, an array of anime goodies and some very nervous traders (body armour, though advisable, is considered uncool), on the other a horde of slavering fans, most of whom are denied regular and easy access to such a wonderful treasure trove. The doors slam open and a veritable feeding frenzy of shopping immediately starts. The number of people in the room defies any attempts to count it, the temperature goes up very perceptibly, and the hotels management begins wishing that it really could call in Special Vehicle Division II to sort out the fans they've opened their doors to for the weekend.

Saturday continues with a visit to the art displays, an active series of panel discussions and a lot of people hanging out together. Saying exactly when things happened starts to get difficult. Time loses meaning within the confines of a con. Probably it's some kind of weird quantum effect caused by reality being bent by so much cuteness and mayhem existing temporarily in one place. I won't tell hoteliers this or they'll start really worrying about insurance for convention weekends.

Saturday afternoon closes with the auction - lots of fun and fannish in jokes plus plenty of chances to buy some really interesting merchandise. But fun as it is, the auction is only a warm up for the main event which is to follow a few hours later - The Masquerade.

** "thank you for the food I'm about to eat! This is a polite thing to say before starting a meal in Japan.*

Illustration from Con Book cover © Steve Kyte 1995

CONDATA

CHAIRMAN : **Jeremy Green**
COMMITTEE:
David Row, Denzil Brown, Richard Poffley, Martin Pay
GUESTS OF HONOUR :
Helen McCarthy, ANIME FX editor and anime author
Steve Kyte, anime and SF artist, ANIME FX art director
ATTENDEES : **380**
FROM : UK, mainland Europe and Canada.
PROGRAMME STREAMS : Video 3, Non-Video 1

CONVENTION AWARDS

Masquerade Best In Show	**Lisa Munns** as SAILOR JUPITER
Masquerade Best Presentation	**Polly Munns** as RYOGA
Artshow Best In Show	**Simon Sung**
Best Fanzine	**ANIMACE**, editor **Melissa Hyland**
Best Fan Manga	**BURNING HIGHWAY**, by **Andy Hepworth**
Honourable Mention	**TOOCLOSE**, by **Ian Waugh**
Best Anime Magazine	**ANIME FX**

The Masquerade is one of only a few moments when virtually everyone attending gathers together in the same place. It's also the subject of much debate. British anime cos-plays are rather small and understated events, played out by people who, though costumed, don't always know how to use their costumed personae to the best effect. This leads to a lot of people desiring to make the event more American or Japanese in style. Standing in the way of this is British reserve and the attitude that masquerades as just a bit of fun which shouldn't really to be taken that seriously. For the moment the masquerade remains something which only a small number of fans participate in. At least the cos-players have a very good time and the audience certainly get into the spirit of thing. This year the standard of the 'serious' costumes was very high as was the number of 'joke' cross-dressing that included a male Lum, Kei. Yuri and Kiki and a female Ryoga. The winner was a stunningly accurate portrayal of Sailor Jupiter.

The Birmingham conventions have another tradition which is entirely unique to them. It tags neatly onto the end of the Masquerade and always raises the roof. Yes folks it's the Politically Incorrect T-Shirt Competition. Unfortunately this is a family magazine so I can't describe the material on said shirts. But the audience certainly let their appreciation be heard. It's entirely possible that the amount of foot stamping and clapping caused by the audience participation judging (ie the T-Shirt which causes the most noise wins) may have started the rumours of a small earth tremor in the Midlands.

Saturday then slowly descended into a series of long and intensely interesting conversations in the hotel bar. Very cool indeed; and hard to escape from. As exhaustion set in I tore myself away to try and get a little sleep.

SUNDAY

The fall-out of Saturday's all-night film showings could be seen lying on chairs and sofas throughout the Grand Hotel's lounge. Meanwhile other bleary-eyed fans picked their way through this to yet another breakfast of gargantuan proportions. (Godzilla would have been proud of these people's appetites.) Only good manners prevented the drinking of freshly brewed coffee straight from the pot.

Sunday is like a low key Saturday. Things happen a little slower, but never slow enough to be boring (boredom was an impossibility at Recontanimeted). Sunday at a convention is also a little sad. Old and new friends have travelling arrangements to fulfil and throughout the day there is always some-one to say goodbye too. But that's enough melancholy. During the morning, the dealers room became the centre for an impromptu display of fanzine editors at work. Low on stock, they decided to assemble some more issues from pages brought down 'just in case'. Calls of 'This is the real fanzine workshop!' echoed through the room.

The closing ceremony, well, err.... closed the con off nicely and confirmed the existence of another sequel next year. It was time to go home, reminisce about the con and think about next year. The committee are going to have a hard job topping this years event, but I think they'll manage it.

Photos by Dave Ross except Kiki, by Robert Lyn Davis

F.A.C.T.S. IV REPORT

THE GUESTS' VIEW by Helen McCarthy

Steve Kyte and I were guests at the convention - our very first guest appearance at a convention in mainland Europe! - and enjoyed every minute of it. The beautiful city of Ghent itself is well worth a visit, with glorious mediaeval and later buildings, works of art and monuments to see, many good restaurants and bars, and even a few excellent comic shops waiting to part you from your currency. What's more, local public transport - trains, trams and buses - is excellent, and makes getting around very easy. So my first word of advice is, when you make your plans for next year's convention, make sure you have at least an afternoon to spare so that you can see the sights, and plan to try out at least one of those wonderful restaurants or bars in the evening.

Fans attending F.A.C.T.S. had no need to worry about the language barrier - it doesn't exist! I had very little need to use my schoolgirl French, because almost everyone at the convention spoke enough English to hold an enjoyable conversation, while all around us we could hear fans talking in Flemish, Dutch, French and German. We were made very welcome and felt completely at home. Steve had taken along some of his Supermarionation and science fiction art, as well as anime material, and he was soon being asked to do sketches. After he made a SAINT SEIYA sketch for one young lady, he was almost besieged by several charming female fans wanting drawings of cute boys, but he also did sf and STAR TREK characters. Meanwhile I was in my element, talking to fans from all over Europe. One thing I learned was that the Internet, so popular in US fandom, is still not widely used in Europe. Some fans have access but it's not yet regarded as a fast means of widespread fan communication. Fanzines and clubs seem to be the main sources of contact for otaku.

The date for F.A.C.T.S. V has not yet been announced, but Steve and I hope to go back to Ghent for next year's convention and that many other fans from all over Europe will join us. And we'd like to take this chance to thank the convention committee, all their helpers and staff for their kindness in inviting us and for making us feel so welcome.

For information about F.A.C.T.S. V, write to Emmanuel van Melkebeke, Code XYZ, Parkplein 5, Gent B9000, Belgium, enclosing a selfaddressed envelope with Belgian stamps or two International Reply Coupons.

THE ORGANISERS' VIEW by Emmanuel Van Melkebeke

To boldly go where no Belgian convention has gone before ..
On 1st October F.A.C.T.S. * took place for the fourth time, thus reaffirming its place as the leading SF/manga/comics convention in Belgium. For those of you who missed it (shame on you!) I'll give a quick survey of the things that happened.

The main happening was of course the convention room itself, where approximately 30 dealers from Belgium, Holland and France were selling their goods to the more than 800 visitors from all around Europe. All kinds of material were available, from the ordinary things you can find in many shops (but often sold much cheaper than in shops) to collectors' items, as well as imported goods. Comics, manga, model kits, action figures, posters C.D.s, trading cards ... you name it and it was there.

The big event, and a premiere for F.A.C.T.S., was of course the arrival of our first special guests, namely Helen McCarthy (the famous and charming editor-in-chief of Anime FX**) and Steve Kyte (the Anime FX artist who is also known for his art for Thunderbirds and other SF-series). Many Belgian fans enjoyed the occasion to have a chat with Helen and/or to ask Steve for a piece of art. Helen was rewarded by even more questions from fans (exit Helen's voice), while Steve basically got a drink for every drawing he made. Steve was never to be seen again behind his mountains of empty glasses ...

Another innovation was the first MAGIC -initiation. It was a great way for many people to finally learn how to play the famous card game which they had heard so much about. Some experienced players passed their afternoon explaining the rules, thus ensuring that the legion of MAGIC-fans would grow with some more initiates.
And last, but not least, there were, of course, some largescreen projections of anime films, which attracted many loyal anime fans. The technical problems which occurred last year were solved, so everybody was able to enjoy high-quality projection. Definitely a must for next year.

In conclusion I can only say that it was once again a fun day, which went very smoothly and where almost everybody *** thoroughly enjoyed himself/herself. Enough reason to start organising F.A.C.T.S. V. So if you only go to one convention next year ...

完

FOOTNOTES :
***F.A.C.T.S. stands for Fantasy Anime Comics Toys Space.**
**** I did not pay Emmanuel to write this bit! - Helen**
***** The police are still looking for the bodies of those who didn't enjoy themselves.**

JONATHAN CLEMENTS

JAPAN

It's a Fair Cop: Tokyo Policewoman Duo

The unstoppable advance of *You're Under Arrest* continues. Even before the PAL versions of the tapes invade our lives in the UK, NTSC versions are already making their way into specialist shops. Oodles of peripherals are soon to follow, and the first bombs of cute merchandise to reach me are two *You're Under Arrest* CDs. The first one, **Police Songs**, is a harmless enough divertimento; a collection of songs by various cast members, some of which contain enough background goings-on to count as side stories. **Only One**, is an actual attempt at a CD drama, based on the flimsy pretext that our heroines get moonlighting jobs as idol singers, disguising their origins by working under the pseudonym of the 'Tokyo Policewoman Duo'. Yes, precisely.

CD tie-ins can be an extremely important influence on anime production, not the least because they require the staff to carry the effect of a production without recourse to the easy thrills of visuals. The emphasis is shifted to characterisation and script, and if I am ever world dictator I intend to pass a law that makes anime production illegal without prior CD release. That ought to scupper some of the worse scripts immediately, because they get shown up for what they actually are. Interestingly enough, it would appear that Kosuke Fujishima has already realised this, because a lot of the production crew behind the *You're Under Arrest* anime are suspiciously absent from the CDs. Firstly, the songwriters of the rather bland opening and ending themes are gone; Fujishima has brought in a much better gang. Most importantly, the anime scriptwriter Michiru Shimada is nowhere to be seen; instead we have the novelty of witty, thoughtful dialogue from Miyoko Yokote.

The tracks on **Police Songs** fall into three categories: the good, the bad and the interesting. 'Interesting' is by far the largest category, consisting of several side stories masquerading as songs. *East-Side Love Story* (#4) is one such track, in which Natsumi (Sakiko Tamagawa) and her boss get up at a karaoke bar for a soppy love song. They're both considerably the worse for wear, a fact which shows itself in Natsumi's hideously off-key singing, and Kacho's utter inability to remember the right words. The other cast members, in character, yell abuse and encouragement in the background, and Kacho's attempts to maintain the dignity of command are very funny. There are similar capers in *Big Fork* (#6), in which motorcycle cop Ken Nakajima tries to impress the ladies by strumming a guitar ballad. Unfortunately, the song is awful, the girls are less than polite, and to make matters worse, Natsumi keeps on misunderstanding the words and causing all sorts of trouble. The whole thing is a thinly-disguised effort on Ken's part to show off to Miyuki, and he eventually flips out when he realises he has become an object of fun.

Ken and Miyuki get another chance in their duet, *Will I Never Say I Love You?*(#9), which has a certain mawkish charm, especially in the musical break when Ken decides it's time to tell her how he feels. He hits her with the 'suki' word (basically 'I fancy you'), but when she hears him he quickly changes it to 'sukiyaki'. Does she like sukiyaki? Oh yes she says: 'Sukiyaki suki da yo!' Whey-hey! Just forget the 'sukiyaki' bit and she's just said she fancies him too! She said it! She said it! Yes, I know, it's all very immature, but I thought it was cute. Oh no, what am I saying?! Ahem...

Office gossip Yoriko gets a song to herself in *Full of Rumours* (#8), the joke being that she's the last person in the world who ought to complain about the wagging of loose tongues. But it's not that funny, and matters are made worse by the alleged 'cuteness' of a singer who can't hold a tune. There are other, more satisfying contributions such as Madame 50cc's aria (yes, aria) *Invincible* (#2), in which she attempts to defend speeding on the ground that she's in perfect control and needs to get to the sales on time. Why oh why aren't the police out catching real criminals, etc etc. Ditto for Strikeman and the Strikettes, with their hit and miss *Medley of Love and Justice* (#10).

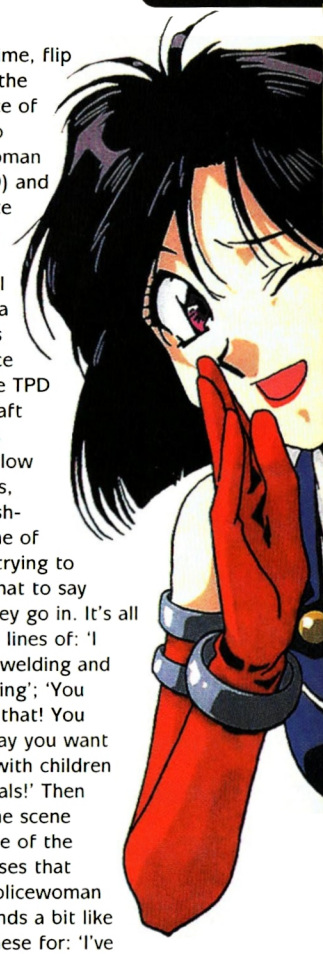
Pics below left to right: East Side Love Story, Capital Battle 2:00 a.m.. Big Fork

ROCKS

The straightforward songs on the CD also have their high points. By far the cleverest is *Data & Dates* (#3), sung by Miyuki (or rather, her voice actress Akiko Hiramatsu). It has little to do with the anime; instead it's a teeny-bop ballad about life behind a computer screen. Our lonely typist goes through the daily routine of typing and filing, trying all the while to find a way of 'installing her dreams'. The song is packed with extremely clever computer imagery, which would be trite in English, but is a great achievement in Japanese. Terms such as access, interrupt, error and break are used with a complete understanding of their double-meaning in English, and that is extremely rare. The best song on the album, however, is *My Private Blue*(#7) by Futaba, a soulful, bluesy number about a lonely woman, beginning to wonder if she'll ever hear wedding bells, getting ready to play the dating game one more time. It's very sad, and very beautiful, and has almost nothing to do with the anime at all except for the singer's walk-on part.

The other CD, **Only One** ought to be different, but has a number of duplicate tracks. There's another version of *East-Side Love Story*, this time in tune and sober, as well as repeats of two of the more lacklustre tunes from **Police Songs**. This means that song-wise, there are only three original songs on the CD. Of these, two are also rather average, but that leaves *We Are Policewomen* (#6), which is truly magical. If you do ever buy **Only One**, you may get your money's worth just by doing what I did, sneaking into an office full of bored people, slipping *We Are Policewomen* onto the stereo, and watching as grown men collapse over the desks, laughing themselves to death. It's a truly appalling rap/teeny-bop song, complete with funky 70s riffs, some poor sod in the background shouting 'YO!' at regular intervals, and insane lyrics about how there's nothing to worry about with these two on patrol. Yes indeed, the genre that gave us *Cop Killer* and *F*** The Police* has now been subverted by the bimbos from hell, complete with verses on not drinking and driving, keeping one's speed below acceptable levels, and looking both ways at junctions. It is truly stupid, and there's nothing quite like it to cheer you up, unless you happen to be one of those cynics who find *You're Under Arrest*'s sanitised view of crime rather distressing. I eagerly await the episode that tells us children can have fun talking to strangers, smoking crack and killing old ladies, but in the meantime I'll have to console myself with the drama on the **Only One** CD.

The drama sections, which occupy over half of **Only One**'s 58 minute running time, flip between the public face of the Tokyo Police-woman Duo (TPD) and the private crises of fame.
Thus we'll get both a silly press conference where the TPD answer daft questions from shallow journalists, and a flash-back scene of the girls trying to decide what to say before they go in. It's all along the lines of: 'I like spot-welding and hang-gliding'; 'You can't say that! You have to say you want to work with children and animals!' Then there's the scene where one of the girls realises that 'Tokyo Policewoman Duo' sounds a bit like the Japanese for: 'I've overstuffed myself with dumplings!' All the scenes are very well done, managing to give the impression that the actresses are ad-libbing all the way through, whereas they are actually reading a very good script. As with so many anime parodies, the audience of otaku they are lampooning are also the audience they expect to buy the product. It may ridicule the media world to some extent, but like *Hummingbirds* before it, it stops short to avoid alienating the consumers. But there are plenty of laughs as the girls argue over their packed lunches and humiliate themselves in public. Plenty of laughs, that is, unless you don't speak Japanese, in which case **Only One** consists of 5 naff songs, over 30 minutes of incomprehensible burbling and *We Are Policewomen*; hardly worth £25. **Police Songs**, on the other side, has some better songs, most of the tracks from **Only One**, and side stories that are suprisingly comprehensible, even to non-Japanese speakers. I'm not sure that I could really recommend either of these, because no matter how good the contents, the prices are rather prohibitive. However, if you're a really big fan of *You're Under Arrest*, I think you'll find **Police Songs** to be the better buy.



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Taiho Shichauzo: Police Songs. *Victor Entertainment: VICL-608.*
Taiho Shichauzo: Only One. *Victor Entertainment: VICL-5267.*

SFXpress

FOREWARD

Even now the despairing voice cries out, crushed beneath the tread of a thousand rubber feet. "When did the rot set in?"

Since a child's eyes were seared wide forever as Kong's fur rippled in the TV glow.

"Addicted, lost, turning to ever more exotic fixes."

Marching through the seas and cities of fantastically different lands. The Lizard King!

"Then, tragedy! Your fever dreams came true!" Living in those lands, overdosing on Giant Rubber Monster junk. "And Godzilla was only the peak of a slippery slope ..."

A living stone god, a giant fire-breathing flying turtle ...

"Of course, once you've seen Gamera the Invincible in action I should abandon all hope."

But the voice still struggled on, even when I turned to the wild world of Japanese small-screen wierdness, where lurk creatures so incredibly strange ...

"What are you watching? How does anyone dare to put this ridiculous spectacle on the screen? What kind of addled mind dares to watch it?"

The voice still lives, still berates me, but I'm trying not to listen. Between you and me, I think it's crazy ...

THE COMPLEA

A guide to the first incarnation of one of Japan's national institutions, by Jolyon Yates

ウルトラマン

THE ORGANISATION

KAGAKU TOKU SO TAI (SCIENCE SPECIAL INVESTIGATION SQUAD) USA : SCIENCE PATROL JAPAN WESTERNISATION : SCIENCE SPECIAL SEARCH PARTY [SSS initials on vehicles]

Despite its name, the Patrol has about as scientific a relationship to monsters as Japanese 'Scientific Research' ships have to whales. Although some remorse crept in, especially in the Akio Jissoji/ Mamoru Sasaki episodes (eg KAIJU HAKABA, ep35), the role of the Patrol and its successors in the Ultra Series (and the similar teams in other monster series and anime) was to act as the Hyper Technology Division of the army, exempt from Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan (forbidding the country to maintain offensive forces). In other words, as soon as a monster appears they are mobilised and direct their scientific attention to killing it.

The Patrol itself is organised like a militia, being led by a Captain (referred to by the other members as "Cappu") and deferring to the Chief of Staff of the Defence Force. The latter character relates the Patrol to the Toho SF movie series, being played by Susumu Fujita who portrayed similar characters in the films. The Godzilla series created its own such team with 'G Force' (in the current 'VS' continuity, 1984 onwards), and both the movie and TV series (from ep3) featured MASER cannons in their anti-monster military armoury.

In the 1960s, when protests against the re-establishment of the right wing and the related controversy over Article 9 had cost the lives and careers of people throughout Japanese society, it is not surprising to see this fantasy of self-assertiveness and confidence, with a Japan equal in status and might to other world powers, as it may have felt itself to be between the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) and the Treaty of Versailles (1919), filtering in to pop culture. In the bright future world of 1993 in which the ULTRAMAN series is set, the Japanese Science Patrol is a vital part of Earth's scientific endeavours (see eps 7, 22, 23, 38, 39).

The decade was also the period when the country's industry and science developed at a phenomenal rate. As reflected, consciously or unconsciously, in the fantasy fiilms and TV series, Japan had experienced horrors spawned by science but came to embrace it. Its military capabilities were clear, but as the peacetime benefits of technological advance to Japanese industry became so evident, optimists could dream of what it might bring to mankind. If we take GOJIRA (1954) and TETSUWAN ATOMU (first published as ATOMU TAISHI, 1951 -) as paradigms of the terror and hope in Japan's relationship with science, then the Ultraman team lies somewhere in the middle, defensive but aggressive, humanitarian but militaristic, embracing the aid of foreign nations and Ultrabeings but always ready to kick Giant Rubber Monster ass.

Two more points of interest about the Patrol : their uniforms (orange jumpsuits, neckties) make them look like sky-diving salarymen; and I think they are the first example of the SF team series, 5 people with a token woman, as seen later in the *sentai* series (HIMITSU SENTAI GO RENJYA/ SECRET TASK FORCE 5 RANGER 1975/4/5-1977/3/26, 84eps) and anime like KAGAKU NINJATAI GATCHAMAN (SCIENCE NINJA TEAM GATCHAMAN 1972/10/1-1974/9/2).

THE CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN MURAMATSU aka CAP
Played by Shoji Kobayashi

Also played the bartender in URUTORAMAN NO TSUKUTA OTOKO-TACHI, Tobei Tachibana in KAMEN RAIDAA (MASKED RIDER/KAMEN RIDER 1971/4/3 - 1973/2/10 98eps), Ridaa No Oyajisan in SILVER MASK, a detective in ULTRA Q THE MOVIE, and dubbed Ralph Cotterill's Colonel Arthur Grant in ULTRAMAN GREAT. You may have seen him in GODZILLA VS KING GHIDORAH (1991) and GODZILLA VS MOSURA (1992) as Ryuzo Tsuchihashi. In ULTRAMAN he's a fatherly figure to the younger, frequently childish team members.

TAIIN (*Member*) **ARASHI**
Played by Ikichi Ishii (he now calls himself Sandayu Dokumamushi)

Played Furuhashi in ULTRA 7, a detective in ULTRA Q THE MOVIE, and a monster actor in URUTORAMAN NO TSUKUTA OTOKO-TACHI. The gunman in the Patrol, and therefore best buddies with Ide the weapons inventor.

TAIIN AKIKO FUJI
Played by Hiroko Sakurai

Played Yuriko Edogawa in ULTRA Q. She now acts in the theatre. The elder sister of the team, usually directing sorties from the base and taking care of little Hoshino.

TAIIN HAYATA
Played by Susumu Kurobe

He was in KIGANJOH NO BOKEN/ ADVENTURE OF THE FANTASTIC ROCK CASTLE/ THE ADVENTURE OF TAKLAMAKAN (1966), and played Musshyu in CHIISANA SUUPAAMAN GANBARON (1977/4/3 - 1977/12/24, 38eps), and a detective in ULTRA Q THE MOVIE. Most of his other roles are villains in Jidai-Geki (period genre, generally samurai dramas). He was the designer of Reddoman & Urutoraman in URUTORAMAN NO TSUKUTA OTOKO-TACHI. As Hayata he doesn't seem to do much apart from exit stage left to become Ultraman. Why do the team put up with him when he usually disapperas at the moment of Giant Rubber Crisis? And how many times does the vehicle he's piloting get trashed? If the Patrol knows Hayata is Ultraman, why does he dodge out of sight to transform?

Hayata was to have gone in search of someone to take up the Beta Capsule baton in ZOKU URUTORAMAN (ULTRAMAN CONTINUES), along with some fellow cast members. A 90min pilot show, 4 hour-long and 26 half-hour-long episodes would have followed. The series was proposed in 1969 but, to allow co-investment from abroad, was reincarnated as KAETTE KITA URUTORAMAN (RETURN OF ULTRAMAN 1971/4/2 - 1972/3/31).

TAIIN IDE
Played by Masaya Nihei

The gizmo genius and team clown, just like the irritiating comedy relief in those 50s spaceflight movies like DESTINATION MOON (1950).

HOSHINO SHONEN (Boy)
Played by Akihide Tsusawa

'Hoshino' means 'of the stars'. The team's identification figure for the audience, and always handy when a scientific concept has to be dumbed down. Just like the big-shoulder types in 50s SF movies.

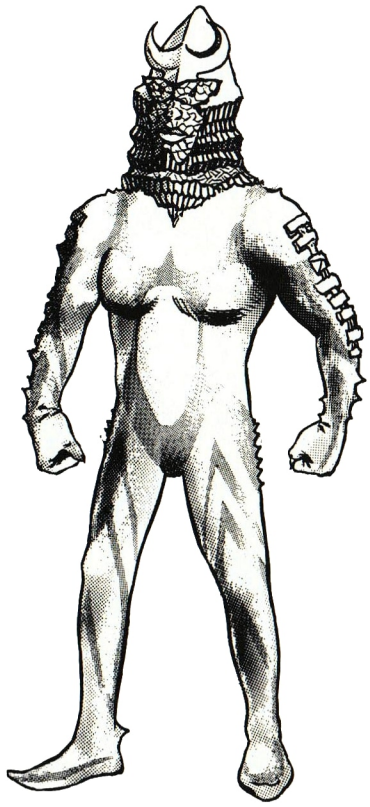
DR. IWAMOTO
Played by Akihiko Hirata (born Akihiko Onoda)

Unforgettable as Dr. Daisuke Serizawa in GOJIRA (1954), his fourth film. He played numerous officers and introverts in jidai-geki (historical) and most Toho SF movies, from SORA NO DAIKAIJU RADON (RODAN, 1956) as Dr. Katsuragi Hisaichiro, to SAYONARA JUPITER (1983) as Dr. Ryutaro Inoue. On TV he was in ULTRAMAN, ULTRA 7 as Colonel Yanagawa, AI NO SENSHI REINBOHMAN (LOVE SOLDIER RAINBOWMAN 1972/10/6 - 1973/9/28) as Mr. K, FIREMAN and DAI TETSUJIN WAN SEBUN (GIANT IRONMAN 17 1977/3/18 - 1977/11/11, 35 eps) as Captain Gomes. He again plays a scientist in ULTRAMAN, but without the intensity and torments of his GOJIRA role, and it's nice to see him being jolly for once, in ep12.

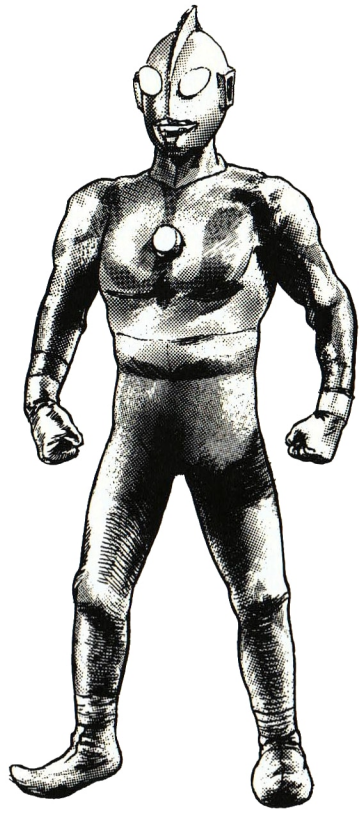
BOEIGUN (*Defence Force*)
BAKURYOCHO (*Chief of Staff*)
Played by Susumu Fujita

Best known as Akira Kurosawa's first leading man, in SANSHIRO SUGATA (JUDO SAGA, 1941) as Sugata Sanshiro, and later in various roles oppisite Toshiro Mifune, eg in YOJIMBO (THE BODYGUARD, 1961)

HEROIC BEMULAR



RED MAN



ULTRAMAN

URUTORAMAN/ ULTRAMAN Height : 40m. Weight : 35000t. From : Nebula M78. Powers : Various (see Episode Guide). Flies at Mach 5. Appearances : ULTRAMAN ep1-39, URUTORAMAN ESU/ ULTRAMAN ACE ep13-14, URUTORAMAN TAROH : MOERO! URUTORA 6 KYOHDAI/ ULTRAMAN TARO : LET'S BURN! 6 ULTRA BROTHERS (1973/12/20), URUTORA 6 KYOHDAI VS KAIJU GUNDAN/ 6 ULTRA BORTHERS VS THE MONSTER ARMY (1974), URUTORA NO SENSHI VS DAIKAIJU GUNDAN : URUTORAMAN ZOFFY/ ULTRA SOLDIERS VS THE GREAT MONSTER ARMY : ULTRAMAN ZOFFY (1979/3/17), URUTORAMAN SUTOHRII/ ULTRAMAN STIORY 1979/7/14), plus compilation films/ series.

In 1963 a story featuring heroic Uchujin UU (Spaceperson Oo) was written but shelved while ULTRA Q was produced. In December 1965 the alien hero became Bemura, a scaly 2-legged gryphon, and the next year became Reddoman (Redman). That March, two scripts were written for Reddoman, the series to follow ULTRA Q, entitled 'Mirai No Sakebi' (which became UM ep12) and 'Barutan Seijin'. Reddoman was considered too inhuman and after costume redesigning was renamed to tie in with being the successor to the first ultra show. Other ideas for his new name were 'Hyakuman' (100 Man) and 'Million Man'. Bemura and Uu (UM ep30) survive in name only.

as Homma. He also played officers in war movies and several Toho SF epics, from CHIKYU BOEIGUN (EARTH DEFENCE FORCE/ THE MYSTERIANS, 1957) as General Morita, to FURANKENSHUTAIN TAI CHITEI KAIJU BARAGON (FRANKENSTEIN VS BARAGON, MONSTER FROM THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH/ FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WROLD, 1965) as the Osaka Police Chief. On TV he appeared in ULTRA Q ep3 & 21, ULTRAMAN, ULTRA 7 as Colonel Yamaoka, and in RETURN OF ULTRAMAN as the Terrestrial Defence Force Commander. His SF roles required little more than being stoical military authority figure, but he has a wonderful range of characters in the Kurosawa movies.

ULTRAMAN
Played by Satoshi Furuya

Played Tiin Amagi in ULTRA 7. Peculiar for superheroes of the day, having an immobile mask on at all times, Ultraman can't help but have a stiff upper lip as he struggles through his difficulties. Masked and unknown but trusted without question by the Patrol, perhaps he's accepted because he's just oozing bushido and the gambaru spirit. He's also not above cruelty and spite towards monsters, attributes not always frowned upon in Japanese schools. A further traditional aspect is his carrying on of a plot structure found in many a samurai drama, for example the very popular ever-running series about Mitokomon, a 3rd Rank Vice General who travels Edo period Japan and at the climax of every episode freezes the villains by crying "Kono mon-dokoro ga me ni hairanu ka" ("Don't you see this symbol of Tokugawa?") and displaying the Shogun's crest. Such a story is called 'kanzen choaku' ('The good are sure to win') and goes way back to folk tales like MOMOTARO. The good will always win in Ultraman, often by pulling off a previously unmentioned special attack or resorting to the irresisitible coup de grace, as if circumstances will always conspire against villainy. Of course, this traditional formula stifles the suspense of the drama, and in ULTRAMAN it is oocasionally broken, but in most superhero series it is rigidly maintained (at least until the final episode, heh heh heh ...)

KAIJU (*Monsters*)
Principal actors : Teruo Aragaki Haruo Nakajima (Godzilla from GOJIRA, 1954, to CHIKYU KOGEKI MEIREI : GOJIRA TAI GIGAN, 1972; Varan in DAIKAIJU BARAN)
Others : Takeo Ikeda, Tsunosuke Izumi, Eiichi Matsushima, Harukichi Nakamura, Koji Ogi, Yukihiro Seino, Kunio Suzuki, et al.

NARRATORS
Koji Ishizaki (eps 1-22) also narrated ULTRA Q.
Mitsuru Urano (eps 23-39).

KEY TO EPISODE GUIDE
Episode no.in order of transmission.) Year/month/day of original transmission. (Number of episode in order of production.) EPISODE TITLE IN ROMAJI. (My unofficial TRANSLATION). TP = Teleplay.D = Director. FX = Special Effect

Where the title of a TV series first comes up, I have tried to find out the following information where possible : JAPANESE TITLE in romaji, WESTERN TITLE (preferably the one used for Western releases), then year/Month/Day of the first episode's transmission -Year/Month/Day of the last episode. For movies I have tried to give the full Japanese title in romaji and release date.

Ultrabeing and Monster names were written in katakana in the show and reference books. Below I give my transliterations and westernisations, which are therefore not writ in stone. Eg (ultraman in katakana) is transliterated as URUTORAMAN and westernised as ULTRAMAN.

EPISODE LISTING

On the 10th of July 1966 in Suginami town Hall a stage show called URUTORAMAN TANJO ZEN'YASAI (BIRTH OF ULTRAMAN) was held for the press. It was videotaped and recreated for the docudrama THE MEN WHO CREATED ULTRAMAN. It introduced Ultraman, the Science Investigation team, Baltan Seijin, the Beta Capsule and Colour Timer and the theme tune. TP Tetsuo Kinjoh D Akio Jissohji, Yuzo Higuchi

1) 66/7/17 (9) UROTORA SAKUSEN DAI ICHIGO (ULTRA OPERATION NO. 1)
TP Tetsuo Kinjoh, Shin-ichi Sekizawa D Hajime Tsuburaya. FX Koichi Takano

A meteor-like globe chases a blue globe, which lands in an Earth lake, while the meteor crashes into a jet piloted by Hayata of the Kagaku Keibitai (Science Investigation Team). Hayata is saved by being merged with the occupant of the golden sphere, Ultraman! Ultraman introduces himself as a being from Nebula M78, and gives Hayata the Beta Capsule, with which he can transform into Ultraman. The other men from the team, Captain Muramatsu, aka "Cap", Ide and Arashi, arrive to investigate Hayata's accident and the thing from another world, leaving female team member Fuji back at base with a boy named Hoshino. Fuji gets a call from Hayata (the phone has King Ghodorah sound effects) and flies

to the lake in the SIII Jet Beetle carrying the S16 sub. Hayata appears in a motorboat and tells the team about the devilish alien criminal Bemura (Bemular), He dives in the S16 but Bemura munches it, so Hayata activiates the Beta capsule and Ultraman leaps into action!

Ultraman's solar energy runs out in three minutes in earth's atmosphere, its depletion marked by changes in the hue and the sound of the colour timer on his chest. During the fight with Bemura his energy runs low but he wins with the Ultra Swing (Urutora Suuingu) and a head-butt (Urutora Zutsuki). The monster flees in its globe but UM zaps it with his Spacium Ray (Supeshiumi Kousen)! He flies off and Hayata emerges. Who was that masked hero?

Bemura's first design was very similar too, but not stolen from, the monsters in DAIKYOJU GAPPA (GAPPA THE TRIFIBIAN MONSTER) 1967.

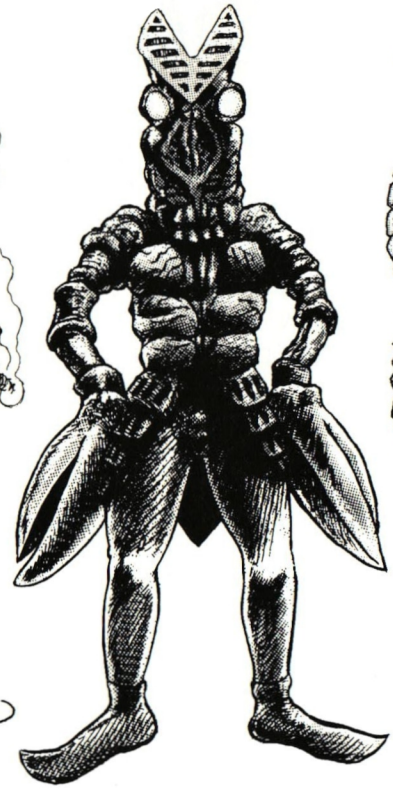
2) 1966/7/24 (1) SHIN-RYAKUSYA O UTE (SHOOT THE INVADER. USA : BLAST THE INVADERS) TP Kitao Senzoku D Toshihiro Iijima FX tohru Matoba

This was the TV debut of Ultraman's best-known enemy, Barutan Seijin. 'Seijin' combines the kanji for 'star' and 'person', so the name can be westernised as Alien Baltan. This begins with Ide breaking the 4th wall by direct address to the viewers. He is going to tell us how he got a black eye. Arashi is called to an institute where everyone is paralysed. He's attacked by Baltan, Space Ninja! It can replicate itself at will and freeze people with a red ray from its claws. It also has a spooky laugh common to many Japanese ghosts. Baltan possesses Arashi to confront the army besieging the Institute. Once Arashi is free Baltan becomes a giant and Ultraman attacks. Ultraman shoots him and tracks down the alien's spaceship. At the end, Ide reveals that he got the black eye when he fell out of his bunk-bed.

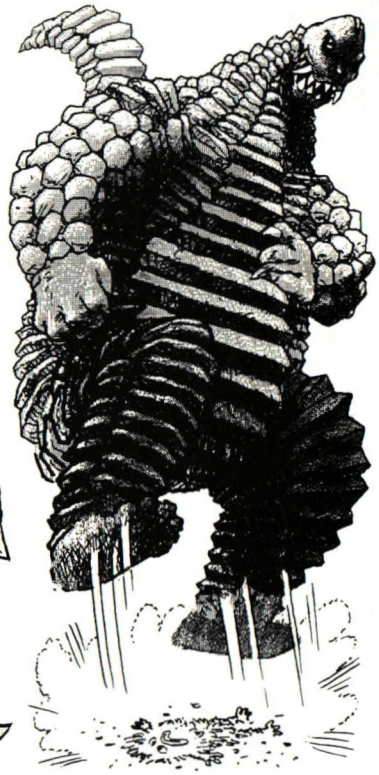
3) 1966/7/31 (3) KATOKUTAI SYUTSUGEKISE YO (MAKE A SORTIE, SCIENCE SPECIAL SQUAD) TP Masahiro Yamada D Toshihiro Iijima FX Tohru Matoba

A boy named Oshiro climbs down a well near Mount Iwami and finds Neronga (Nelonga) which breaks out of the earth and destroys a hydro-electricity station. Neronga is usually invisible, but is glimpsed

SPACE MONSTER BEMULAR



ALIEN BALTAN



SKULL MONSTER RED KING

when it is sucking up electricity through the horn on its head.When the Science team arrive Oshiro steals a rifle and burns out one of Neronga's eyes. Hayata turns into Ultraman, hurls Neronga (the Gansekiotoshi move, sumo sports-fans) and burns it to ashes. Oshiro : "BANZAI, ULTRAMAN!"

4) 1966/8/7 (4) DAIBAKUHATSU GO BYO MAE (5 SECONDS BEFORE THE BIG EXPLOSION) TP Ryuu Minamikawa D Mimachi Nonagase FX Koichi Takano

A rocket to a space station crashes in the sea, causing floods near the Melanesia Islands. Ragon, the Black Lagoon-type creature from ULTRA Q ep20, arises from the sea, this time a giant able to push ships underwater! Hayata visits a surviving sailor while Fuji and Hoshino go for a holiday at the Hayama Marina and get landed with looking after a spoiled girl, Michiko. Giant Ragon attacks the marina while Hayata is crossing it by ferry. The team sees that Ragon has a missile stuck in its back. Ide remembers it goes crazy for music and its subsequent dancing nearly dislodges the missile. Hayata turns to Ultraman and as his energy runs low zaps Ragon off the cliff and flies the missile into space before it explodes. Michiko has become humble and obedient after the trauma of a Giant Rubber Monster attacking her in bed.

5) 1966/8/14 (2) MIROGANDA NO HIMITSU (MIROGANDA'S SECRET) TP Keisuke Fujikawa. D Toshihiro Iijima. FX Tohru Matoba

A car crashes in a tunnel. A slimy creature like a Pitcher Plant absorbes the driver then oozes off to eat a botanical scientist. Arashi and Ide go to a botanical research centre where they get a lecture from Dr. Iwamoto about the crossovers between plants and animals. Another scientist recalls (in black and white) a trip to Oirisu Island where they found a giant, beautiful orchid (in colour) which they identified as Miroganda, and she was ambushed by a plant. The plant man, Guriin Monsu (Green Monse) attacks her home, and the Science Squad scientifically zap it. Green Monse becomes a giant and Ultraman, though choked by its spores, burns it to death.

6) 1966/8/21 (5) ENGAN KEIBI MEIREI (ORDER TO GUARD THE COAST) TP Masahiro Yamada D Mimachi Nonagase FX Koichi Takano

At Yokohama a sea monster is seen by a boy, Chiro, but his friends only see the infamous smuggler Diamond Kick. Chiro calls the Science Squad but they laugh at him! An old salt tells the kids the legend of Gesura (Guesra), a monster with a craving for chocolate, just in time for

UCHU KAIJU BEMURA/SPACE MONSTER BEMULAR.
Height : 50m Weight : 25000t. From : Planet M35. Powers : Breathes blue flame, flies in the form of a blue ball. Appearances : UMep1. See UROTORAMAN caption

BARUTAN SEIJIN, UNCHU NINJA / ALIEN BALTAN, SPACE NINJA
Height : Microscopic to 50m. Weight : 0 to 15000t. From : Planet Barutan. Powers : Self-replication. Claws fire white disintegration ray & red freeze ray. Appearance : UM ep2.

BARUTAN SEIJIN 2
As above, except it comes from Planet R and has the powers Gravity Storm, Superugen Reflection Ray and Teleportation. Appearance :UMep16.

BARUTAN SEIJIN 3
As VBarutan 2 but under Mefuirasu Seijin's control. Appearance : UM ep33. Other Baltans were in KAETTE KITA URUTORAMAN (Baltan Seijin Jnr.), URUTORAMAN 80 (Barutan Seijin 5 & 6), ZA URUTORAMAN, ANDORO MEROSU (Meka Barutan), UROTORAMAN PAWADO and various commercials. The first arch emeny of the Ultrabeings blends a lobster with the head of Semi-Ningen (ULTRA Q ep16) and elements of samurai armour.

DOKURO KAIJU REDDO KINGU/SKULL MONSTER RED KING
Height : 45m Weight : 20,000t From: Tatarajima Powers: Tusks, strength, hooliganism Appearances : UM eps8, ep25 (RED KING 2), URUTORAMAN 80, ZA URUTORAMAN, URUTORAMAN PAWADO (most ULTRAMAN POWERED were from the ULTRAMAN series)

Guesra to surface and tear up a Columbian ship carrying cocoa beans. Diamond Kick, looking for diamonds he has smuggled in with the cocoa, catches them nosey kids but is trapped in the wreckage when Guesra trashes the warehouse. Hayata rescues Chiro and his plucky chums, and, as Ultraman, rips out Guesra's fin. The kids get a slap-up chocolate feast. Guesra, whose costume incorporates the head from Peter (ULTRA Q ep26), apparently comes from Brazil!

7) 1966/8/28 (6) BARAJI NO AOI ISHI (THE BLUE STONE OF BARAJI)
TP Tetsuo Kinjoh, Ryuu Minamikawa D Mimachi Nonagase FX Koichi Takano

This episode introduces another Ultrabeing, and it's played straight with relatively little clowning. Jim takes the squad in their Jet Beetle on a mission to investigate a wierd funnel of light in the area of Northern Iran. Fuji is left at base as usual. In the desert they find a meteor with something alive inside, and are attacked by a burrowing monster which projects the light funnel, a rainbow magnetic ray. Jim and the team find the ancient town of Barajia near Mount Ararat, sparsely populated by a few Tibetan-looking people. Linguist Jim can't speak their language, but their revered elder Jahtan can speak Japanese. She is an 'ESPer' who came to Barajia on the Silk Road. Now the 'disaster monster' Antoraa (Antlar) has returned as prophesied. She reveals a statue of the Barajian god, Noa, an Ultraman who came to Earth 5000 years ago. Noa holds a gem to defend them against Antlar. The monster, a stag-beetle man, emerges. (A few DUNGEONS & DRAGONS creatures seem to be based on ULTRAMAN monsters. Antlar, for example, is a dead ringer for the Umber Hulk.) Ultraman fights Antlar but still has that embarrassing problem with losing his energy after 3 minutes, so Cap throws the Noa gem at Antlar and kills it! Jahtan gives a sad speech about Baraj being doomed, but immortal in the hearts of its people.

8) 1966/9/4 (8) KAIJU MUHO CHITAI (THE FORBIDDEN LAND OF MONSTERS)
TP Tetsuo Kinjoh, Shozoh Uehara D Hajime Tsubaraya FX Koichi Takano

The Science Squad fly to Tatara Island where Chyandoraa (Chandlar : the same bat-walrus suit as Pegira from ULTRA Q ep5 & 14) and Reddo Kingu (Red King the Skull Monster, a sort of pinhead Michelin Man, in the first of many appearances) are having a savage fight. There's lots of blood and Red King rips off Chandlar's right wing (Cold War subtext? Discuss.) The squad go in search of the scientists working on the island. They're attacked by a blood-sucking ivy named Sufuran (Suflan) which they burn with the Spider Shot gun. They then see Pigumon (Pigmon), a man-sized scarlet Garamon (from ULTRA Q ep13 & 16) and by tagging him with a balloon follow the friendly creature back to the last surviving scientist, Matsui. Matsui explains the monsters are dinosaurs unleashed from slumber by an earthquake. Meanwhile on the beach, Cap and Hayata meet Maguraa (Maglla), a spiky burrower, and kill it with grenades. Hayata is knocked off a cliff and hit by boulders but recovers in time to turn to Ultraman and save the others from Red King by Seoi Nage (overshoulder throw, also used in ep35) and strangling it (Nekko Hangingu). Pigumon is crushed in the fight and the dead scientists are buried.

9) 1966/9/11 (7) DENKO SEKKA SAKUSEN (OPERATION LIGHTNING FLASH)
TP Masahiro yamada D Mimachi Nonagase FX Koichi Takano
A typhoon (b & w footage, probably from a Toho film but I couldn't identify it for certain) uproots a boys' camp. Next morning two of them cycle off across the torn land for supplies. Gabora (Gavora), a quadruped with a Dune sandworm-like head, emerges at Unara Town and battles the Army and the Science Squad, who suggest baiting it with a "Uran [Uranium] Capsule". Everyone, from the boys to road-workers, seems to know Gabora on sight. Its head opens up to reveal a Gamera-like inner head which fires a Uranium 235 ray. Hayata is carrying the Uran Capsule by chopper but crashes, and yet again he drops the Beta Capsule but recovers it just in time. Ultraman gets to mutilate and kick another creature to death. I think this was the first episode where the narrator didn't explain about the Colour Timer during the fight.

NEXT ISSUE : More episode details and a look at the weapons and craft of the series!

All illustrations by the author

ALIEN BALTAN

ANTLAR

GABORA

CHANDLAR

RED KING

SCIENCE SPECIAL SEARCH PARTY WITH HAYATA ON THE RIGHT

INCOMING

DECEMBER 1995

Our industry insider CHRYSANTHEMUM MORDIN reports on what's on offer in UK and US shops this month, and offers her personal recommendations. All these titles can be ordered from specialist comic shops.

MANGA

ACADEMY COMICS LTD

ROBOTECH: Metal Swarm #1
ROBOTECH II : SENTINELS Book IV #1
ROBOTECH : RETURN TO MACROSS #27
ROBOTECH : ACADEMY BLUES #4

A.M.WORKS

A new company publishing manga influenced titles.
ATHENA #2 by Dean Hsieh : More modern-day Greek god antics.

ANTARCTIC PRESS

This company specialises in dojinshi or non-professional fan manga.
GOJIN #5 by Takizawa & Kondo.
SILBUSTER #13 by Ikkou Shahara. Superheroics is never easy - in this issue, one of the Silbuster girls goes out on a date, only to get caught in the middle of a giant monster raid!
VAMPIRE MIYU #3 by Narumi Kakinouchi. The demon Remies seeks revenge on Miyu, and the return of his friend Larva - now Miyu's servant! Dark and effective. ***Recommended.***
NINJA HIGH SCHOOL '95 SWIMSUIT SPECIAL by Various
STAINLESS STEEL ARMADILLO #6 by Ryukihei. The final issue in the sword and sorcery series. At last, the seal is broken and the power is unleashed in a final cataclysmic battle.
WARRIOR NUN AREALA Book Two #3 by Ben Dunn. The manga influenced series continues.
GORGON #1 by Chouji Maboroshi. Uncensored adult entertainment. ***Mature readers only.***

CPM COMICS

CYBER CITY : PART THREE #1 by Tim Eldred and Studio Go! Adapts the third OAV, the vampire killings, with everyone's fave bishonen Benten.
PROJECT A-KO : VERSUS 2 by John Ott and Studio Go!

DARK HORSE COMICS

You can always be assured of quality releases from this company, and a diverse selection of titles that don't rely on violence to entertain!
OH MY GODDESS PART 3 #2 by Kosuke Fujishima : Love Potion #9 Special. A magical love potion ends up in the wrong hands and now, instead of one lovesick goddess following him around, Keiichi has three!
GUNSMITH CATS #8 by Kenichi Sonoda . A car bomb is about to explode, taking a lot of innocent people with it - unless bomb freak Minnie May can get to it in time!
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST #1 by Kosuke Fujishima. From the creator of OH MY GODDESS, it's babes and badges! Two gorgeous young police officers who don't always follow the rules debut in this action packed new series. ***Recommended.***
GODZILLA #7 by Stradley etc.
3 X 3 EYES #3 by Yuzo Takada. Yakumo has finally come to terms with the fact that he'll never be normal until Pai becomes mortal - and so he prepares to leave Tokyo - but first they must confront the deadly mythical beast Gesu! ***Recommended.***

EROS COMICS

This company occasionally release Japanese erotic comics, but it's definitely all Mature Readers Only.
COUNTDOWN : SEX BOMBS #2 by Hiroyuki Utatane.
PRINCESS OF DARKNESS #4 by Yuichiro Tanuma.
SEXHIBITION #2 by Suehiro Gari.

MANGA PUBLISHING

MANGA MANIA #30 by various. News, reviews and manga serials.

MANGAJIN

MANGAJIN #52. Japanese language and popular culture are explored in this extremely useful monthly magazine.

MARVEL COMICS

AKIRA #38 by Katsuhiro Otomo. ***Highly recommended.***

R. TALSORIAN GAMES

V-MAX VOL 2 #5. Profiles of the latest from Yuzo (3 x 3 EYES, CAT-GIRL NUKU NUKU) Takada, BLUE SEED, with character bios and an episode guide.

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS

This company are not afraid to take chances, with offerings ranging from shojo (girls') manga to political manga, light-hearted comedy, and more.
2001 NIGHTS GRAPHIC NOVEL by Yukinobi Hoshino. Hard science fiction tales about a multinational team of explorers investigating the newly found tenth planet of the solar system, whose journey is plagued by death and sabotage.
MAISON IKKOKU PART 5 #2 by Rumiko Takahashi. We finally meet Mrs. Ichinose's mysterious husband, in the aftermath of a wild party in Maison Ikkoku.
MANGA VIZION VOL 1 #10 by Various.
RIOT #3 by Satoshi Shiki. Billy the Kid must continue to protect the mysterious Axel. Wild West meets anime in this peculiar action-adventure.
BIO BOOSTER ARMOUR GUYVER PART 4 #2 by Yoshiki Takaya.
FIST OF THE NORTH STAR PART 2 #2 by Buronson & Hara. Ken tries to help a town ravaged by bandits who have just stolen the town's last drops of precious water!
NAUSICAA PART 5 #6 by Hayao Miyazaki. ***Recommended.***
CRYING FREEMAN PERFECT COLLECTION : SHADES OF DEATH VOL #1 by Koike & Ikegami.
RETURN OF LUM PART 2 #5 by Rumiko Takahashi.
SANCTUARY PART 4 #5 by Fumimura & Ikegami. Hojo and Asami's secret is finally revealed - will their ten-year journey to power be all in vain?
ANIMERICA VOL 3 #11. All the usual anime news/reviews, plus the debut of Clamp's X-1999 as an ongoing manga strip.
BATTLE ANGEL ALITA PART 5 #6 by Yukito Kishiro.
RANMA 1/2 PART 5 #1 by Rumiko Takahashi. The introduction of a new character in the series provides another would-be fiancee for poor Ranma - spatula-wielding Ukyou, who was betrothed to Ranma as a child. (Yet another one!) ***Recommended.***

ANIME: US RELEASES

AD VISION

COUNTDOWN Subtitled. Two erotic adult tales, available in an uncut and an edited version.
DEVIL HUNTER YOHKO VOL 6 Subtitled. The teenage demon hunter returns, only to meet her greatest challenge yet - herself?
END OF SUMMER VOL 2 Subtitled. Adult material.

ANIMEIGO

MADOX-01 Dubbed. The mech comedy classic now available in English. (NB This is AnimEigo's own dub, different from Manga Video's UK version.)
URUSEI YATSURA TV VOL 17 Subtitled.

ANIME 18

DEMON BEAST INVASION VOL 2 Subtitled. An erotic horror adventure from the creator of LEGEND OF THE OVERFIEND.

LUMIVISION

LEGEND OF THE FOREST/ ASTROBOY Dubbed Laserdisc. Side one contains the haunting LEGEND OF THE FOREST, Tezuka animation set to classical music, while side two contains two episodes of the classic Astroboy.

SOFTWARE SCULPTORS

METAL FIGHTERS MIKU VOL 3 Subtitled. Female battlesuit wrestling hits the big time! Episodes 6 & 7 of the series on one cassette.

STREAMLINE

ROBOTECH PERFECT COLLECTION : MACROSS VOL 8 Dubbed
ROBOTECH PERFECT COLLECTION : MOSPEADA VOL 8 Dubbed
ROBOTECH PERFECT COLLECTION : SOUTHERN CROSS VOL 8 Dubbed.

US MANGA CORPS

ANIME HYPERGUIDE #1: PROJECT A-KO. The all-new Hyperguide is the ultimate source for anime fans - available on a hybrid CD-ROM (Mac/Windows compatible), it contains in-depth information on a specific anime series (in this case, the PROJECT A-KO series) including interviews, storyboards, designs, characters and more!
GALL FORCE : NEW ERA VOL 2 Subtitled.
SOHRYUDEN VOL 2 Subtitled.

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS

RANMA 1/2: GOODBYE GIRL-TYPE Dubbed. With salvation finally in sight (the return to full 'manhood') Ranma is ready to do anything to get the cure for his 'problem' - even if that includes venturing into the girls' locker room!

VOYAGER VIDEO

SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO Subtitled. The original Yamato film which broke movie theater attendance records and launched 4 sequels.

ANIME:UK RELEASES

A thin time this month as British video companies slow down their schedules over the holiday season.

KISEKI

SOL BIANCA EPISODE 2 Subtitled.

MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

ZEIRAM - The live action movie in which IRIA (the manga version) is based. Classic model work from Keita Amemiya.
PROJECT A-KO 5: THE VS GREYSIDE "Alternate" story of the wacky schoolgirls transported onto another Universe.

MANGA SCAN

CYBER WEAPON Z #1: ETERNAL YOUTH

Big in Europe, but virtually unknown outside Britain's Chinatowns, Andy Seto and Chris Lau have been slaving over **Cyber Weapon Z** for several years. Along with Zhen Wen's **Magical Super Asia, Cyber Weapon Z** has started to beat a path of accolades into the difficult home market of Japan, and is now drifting into the UK via the unlikely route of a French translation.

CYBER WEAPON

From the opening sequence, which zooms in on a flying Shaolin Temple, you know that there's something very different about **Cyber Weapon Z**. In a luxurious future of easy-living, human evolution has ground to a halt. The people of Shaolin put themselves through terrifying tests of endurance in order to induce their own physical and mental betterment, and remain ever fearful that the peace is more fragile than it appears. New kid in the precinct Park Iro is a talented fighter, presenting a threat to established top-gun Loneken Carlsber. However, student rivalries are soon set aside as mysterious goings-on threaten to upset the status quo. Book #1 ends on a cliff-hanger as the death-god Molitofou breaks out of his imprisonment, and threatens to plunge the universe into conflict once more.

Tonkam's first pseudomanga release is a joy to behold, displaying production values and attention to detail that all (yes, all) English-speaking companies would kill for. Many Cantonese comics begin life in messy inks, printed on shabby, cheap stock, but Tonkam have spared no expense with their French version: sturdy boards, a nice wrap-around cover and subtle four-colour printing on good-quality paper. Seto and Lau must be very pleased with the way it looks.

Sylvie Tran Nguyet-Chau and François Jacques have come up with a lively translation, which surpasses Seto's original in giving distinctive voices to each character. The original Chinese sound effects have been retained, with unobtrusive onomatopoeia where necessary, and the French translation is faultless. The only places where it stumbles are where it has been forced to follow Seto's fractured idea of English and romanisation. **Cyber Weapon Z**, for example, is an awful, trashy way of translating the Cantonese title, although such a Chinglish travesty is

REVIEWED BY JONATHAN CLEMENTS

not the fault of the French. Bear in mind that the series has a fascistic, Nietzschean theme of 'that which does not kill us makes us stronger', and a translation of **Ultimate Force**, or **Supreme Divinity** might be closer to the meaning. Trivia collectors might also like to know the way in which the words are normally translated out of Japanese into English: 'overfiend'...

still mysteriously quiet about the pink-haired girl in the mantlepiece photo.

With drama like this to hold your attention, the book rushes past before you know it. The story has hardly begun, but if the rest of the series is anything like *Eternal Youth*, you can guarantee I'll be first in the queue. Magnifique!

In 1994, Seto told the Dutch prozine *Animenia* that his characters were directly derived from Japanese roots. Apart from Loneken, who was modelled on the **Fist of the North Star**, the other major roles were all inspired by **Streetfighter II**. The dark silent Iro has a lot of Ryu about him, and the dewy-eyed Anling is a stylish take on Chun Li. She even shares Chun Li's patronising rationale for becoming a warrior; as Loneken explains, a woman is only likely to get ahead in the fighting business if it's a family tradition. The feral Rosaland might look like a Puma Twin in a bad mood, but Seto claims her shape-shifting rage was inspired by the T2000 in **Terminator 2**.

Which such references, you might be forgiven for thinking that **Cyber Weapon Z** is likely to be another bad case of Hong Kong plagiarism, but it's not. Whatever his original sources of inspiration, Seto has created something that it worth much more than the sum of its parts. His characters are well-rounded, intriguing individuals, and I was hooked from page one. The tension between Iro and Anling especially, chugs along at bursting point. From the moment their eyes meet in a thumping, 'slow-motion' gasp of a page, you know that hormones are a-raging. Their rooms are in separate buildings, but their balconies almost touch, throwing them together at every conceivable opportunity. And Iro is a real dark horse, noble enough to tear down the nude poster in his room, but

Asatte Dance #1: The Luckiest Boy in Tokyo

If you've ever wondered what **Urusei Yatsura** would be like if slightly older and devoid of Lum, then this ought to be next on your shopping list. **Asatte Dance** takes an average university student and 'curses' him with the attentions of a sexy, mysterious squatter who pops in and out of his life like certain more famous magical girlfriends, just... not so magical. But the plot soon takes a turn away from the usual Lum/Belldandy capers when it becomes clear that the lovely Aya might not just be after hero Suekichi's body. Suekichi discovers that, for the nuttiest of reasons, he is the sole beneficiary of his grandfather's will. Unless, that is, Aya really is his grandfather's-mistresses'-son's-adoptive-daughter, in which case she's entitled to half. But even if she isn't already one of the family she's certainly trying hard enough to get in, mainly with that old hole-in-the-condom routine.

Naoki Yamamoto's gentle, witty manga is another gorgeous release in Tonkam's French manga line, although British fans should bear in mind that the more sedate, cerebral nature of the plot makes it much more reliant on dialogue, and hence a more daunting task for the amateur French-speaker. Matters are not helped by Yamamoto's meandering plot, which polite reviewers might call picaresque. The business with grandfather's will disappears for several dozen pages in order to accommodate the superfluous activities of the university theatre troupe, before clunking back onto the previous track. While the two strands might come together in book #2, the overall effect in book #1 left this reader wondering if he hadn't mistakenly picked up two manga that had crashed into one another.

Whatever Yamamoto's plot might eventually turn into, **Asatte Dance** is an extremely 'French' manga release. All the characters look suitably Gallic, and spend most of their time eating, screwing and discussing the meaning of life. There's even an actor who spends the entire story trapped inside a frog mask, which adds a note of the absurd to the proceedings. One can't help but wonder if Tonkam will be tempted to next flex their translation muscles with **Kiseiju**, a surreal manga whose protagonist becomes infected with the parasite of Dadaesque art. It, too, would have a suitably 'art-house' feel, and appeal to French cultural sensibilities, and translators Hiroshi Takahashi and Frédéric Guyader are certainly up to the task. Whatever Tonkam try next, it is certainly heartening to see not only a manga industry that does not rely on 'second-generation' translations of English versions, but one that manages to scoop up such culturally-unique works. **Asatte Dance** is an interesting manga, but it also tells you a lot about the French, both in terms of their high standards and their refusal to succumb to unwelcome cultural imports, either from Japan or from the English-speaking world.

JONATHAN CLEMENTS

Angel #2

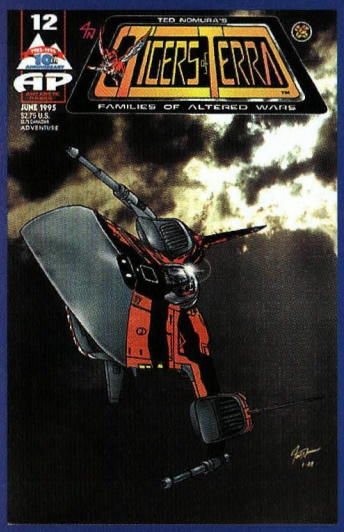
The plot is already in its tenth chapter, but I get the idea that plot is not the number-one consideration in U-Jin's porno manga. This is typical one-handed reading material, and as such is divided up into neat little five-minute tableaux of flesh. I'll say one thing for Tonkam though, unlike certain British companies they'll put adult material in its proper place. They also do **Ushio & Tora**, **Devil Hunter Yoko**, **Asatte Dance**, **RG Veda** and **Video Girl Ai**, without a swear-word in sight. That's because all the smut is concentrated where it belongs, in **Angel**.

To pick a typical chapter from the table of contents, sexy schoolgirl Miyazawa is getting unwelcome extra lessons from her PE teacher (cue several pages of the usual). Now she's pregnant and comes to our hero Kosuke for help. Kosuke is incensed that the teacher is '...abusing young girls without sharing them round' (I kid you not), and helps Miyazawa catch him out with a camera (after another dozen pages of action). Then the heroic Kosuke takes his reward (fill in the blanks yourself). The morals are corrupt and hypocritical, the girls are underage objects not even considered worthy of names in many cases, and the material runs the gamut of activities from anal to zoophily.

For one used to the relative coyness of mainstream Japanese porno publishing, I was quite shocked at the content, thinking initially that our European cousins had drawn all the sexual organs back in! However, since the Japanese Cybele Publishers are unheard-of here, and that 'U-Jin' is clearly a pseudonym, I'll stick my neck out and say that all the explicit scenes were present in the original. There are even some pervy magic-eye stereograms that pop up at irregular intervals. I won't tell you what I thought I saw in them, you might think I needed a holiday.

Angel takes the **Tenchi Muyo** plotline of a guy with a harem of willing nymphettes to its explicit extremes, landing itself smack-bang in the hard-core manga porn category. I tried writing a list of the perversions and acts that it missed out, but didn't get very far. There's also an element of humour, but not that much because this is porn at it's most sexist and exploitative, except of course, no-one's being exploited because these are only drawings on a page. This is not even top-shelf material, it's under-the-counter stuff; if Customs are still seizing Robert Crumb, you won't see **Angel** on sale in this country until Satan ice-skates to work. I was disgusted every time I read it.

JULIA SERTORI



TIGERS OF TERRA

Ted Nomura's wide-ranging war saga TIGERS OF TERRA (subtitled FAMILES OF ALTERED WARS) has been around for quite a while, but sporadic distribution here in the UK has meant that it's never really gotten a fair crack of the whip with readers, and a storyline that's tough to penetrate on an initial reading might have scared off the more casual comics fans. The summer of 1995 saw this book on track at last to a monthly schedule, so now is as good a time as any to take a dip into the complex and engaging universe Nomura has created. The current series is the second 'maxi-series' of TOT, the last being a 12-part quarterly that ended in '94. Fans of Antarctic's flagship book NINJA HIGH SCHOOL may remember TOT for its appearance in the 2-part crossover miniseries THE TROUBLE WITH TIGERS. Like Kaoru Shintani in his AREA 88 manga, Nomura is a man in love with his mecha, and TIGERS is smartly built to showcase that love. The backstory is a complicated alternate world where the World Wars had differing outcomes, where a biological plague altered the balance of the sexes 10-1 in favour of females, where now a second war is being fought on an almost-identical Earth on the other side of the sun (shades of the movie DOPPELGANGER, known in the USA as JOURNEY TO THE FAR SIDE OF THE SUN ...) Our cast of heroes are mostly female, mostly fighter jocks in the Flying Cosmotiger squadron, all with a legacy that stretches back through the ages. Nomura makes copious use of flashbacks and historical interludes to switch back and forth between "past" and "present", often indulging his love of WWII German military hardware and iconography. The art is neat and pristine, if occasionally flat, and emulates Shintani now and then when it drops into pure manga style for the odd effect. But the story is a sticking point - TIGERS OF TERRA seems like a very interesting tale, and after chain-reading five issues I'm still floundering to follow it. I'm reminded of BABYLON 5 - great to look at, but tough to get into unless you've been following it from the start.

JIM SWALLOW

TWILIGHT X QUARTERLY

Originally a strip appearing in Antarctic's MANGAZINE anthology, TWILIGHT X has had a chequered past that's taken it through four different publishers before settling down at Antarctic. Not happy with being a mere quarterly, the book is also appearing in colour as a back-up in the WARRIOR NUN AREALA spin-off SHOTGUN MARY. Wight's comic is set in a post-war world, circa 2002, where countries and governments have fallen by the wayside and factionalism is rife. The story follows the fortunes of a band of ex-soldiers and renegades, teamed up together "to find purpose in the midst of violence and apathy..." Wight's art style is instantly appealing, rendered in smooth tonal washes of black, white and grey. His manga influence is clear in his characters and the cinematic layout of the panels and splash pages - an excellent example in the issue I studied (#3) was a double-page spread of a mid-air collision between a helicopter gunship and a fighter jet. Like the scene that precedes it, it literally comes out of nowhere. In the work of Matsumoto, Shirow et al, the character art pales when compared with the mecha art, and Wight's strikingly accurate jets, subs and assorted other hardware are of a similar stripe. The characters are a little 'toony (and I'm sure he has a good reason why some of their eyes have pupils and some don't) but it doesn't detract. With the extra side-stories by Morris & Co., this one's a good catch. The only downside I can think of to this book is that because of its journeyman nature, finding pre-Antarctic back issues will probably be impossible.

JIM SWALLOW

CYBER WEAPON Z,
colour hard back, series Vol.1-
ETERNAL YOUTH. Story Chris Lau,
art: Andy Seto,
pub. Tonkam FFR.75
ISBN 2-910 645-18-5
Translated into French by Sylvie
Tran Nguyet-Chan

ANGEL Vol 2,
b/w paperback, story & art: U-Jin,
pub. Tonkam FFR 45,
ISBN 2-910 645-25-8
Translated into French by
Hiroshi Takahashi

ASATTE DANCE Vol 1,
b/w paperback,
story & art : Naoki Yamamoto,
pub. Tonkam FFR 70,
ISBN 2-910 645-24-X
Translated into French by Hiroshi
Takahashi & Frederick Guyader

TIGERS OF TERRA,
b/w 'maxi-series'.
Story & art : Ted Nomura,
pub. Antarctic Press, monthly,
$2.75. (US)

TWILIGHT X QUARTERLY,
b/w ongoing series.
Story & art : Joseph Wight,
additional stories : Tom Morris,
pub. Antarctic Press. $2.95 (US)

VIDEO SCAN

U.K. RELEASES

THE CYBERPUNK COLLECTION

MANGA VIDEO, MANV 1109, 5 hrs approx, cert 18.

Compilation tapes always leave a nasty taste in my mouth; if you wanted the thing you've probably bought it already in single instalments, and putting the identical release into another packaging to tempt you anew smacks off ripoff. There'd be some point if they'd subtitled the tapes, but these are just straight re-releases. So is there anything to recommend this collection? Well, at eight quid an hour it's certainly cheaper than THE GUYVER, and the quality of both story and animation is for the most part much higher. Blatantly aimed at the festive gift market, as well as those MV describe as the "'collect all ' fans", it puts all the episodes for each of the three titles in said collection onto one tape and wraps the lot in a fairly sad box design of the type that British games companies put on their covers because they can't afford a decent artist. But if you've already got one of the titles it reduces the value of the Collection considerably. The individual titles are different enough to make buying them all as a set for one viewer an uncertain bet. My esteemed fellow-reviewer Peter J. Evans rates the meandering ickfest GENOCYBER, though personally I think it's nasty and brutish and wish it was short. My own favourite is AD POLICE, a bleaker and colder take on MegaTokyo than BUBBLE GUM CRISIS, with homages to those influential cybericons THE TERMINATOR and ROBOCOP lifted into real originality by thoughtful storylines of life in a not-so-brave new world. Our revered Editor, a shameless sucker for romance, adores CYBER CITY OEDO 808, and I can see its charms as a piece of cyberbaroque. I don't share her view that it brings something new to its filched ideas, but it rehashes the mix of heroic criminals, corrupt societies, vampires and rage against the machine with a certain style. In short, though, I have to conclude this Collection is not one of Manga Video's greater ideas, at least not for the punter. If someone wants to spend forty quid on you this Christmas, their generosity could be better directed. *Everyone* needs socks; you don't need the Cyberpunk Collection.

RORY DONNELLY

SOL BIANCA 1

KISEKI FILMS, KIS 94046, 55 mins approx. English subtitles

Before I start, let me make a plea to all anime British video companies - and it is general; Kiseki are not the only guilty parties - please, please get your anime duped onto decent quality videotape. I'm tired of cleaning the gunk off my video heads and I'm sure your customers would appreciate better image reproduction and less fallout. But this aside, SOL BIANCA is a good buy. There's nothing too remarkable about the story except that all the dynamic roles are played by women, but it's an enjoyable science fiction adventure with good, solid characters. The design is excellent: the SOL BIANCA itself is a distinctive and beautiful ship, more like a piece of modern sculpture than a utilitarian travelling box, and I was very impressed with the costumes, which have enough individuality to look like the kind of clothes real people might choose to wear. The production values are pretty good for an OAV and the soundtrack is a good foil for the action. Julia Sertori talked at some length about translation in the last issue, and I must admit that I can see what she means; the use of female protagonists changes the perspective on language, and Jonathan Clements' neutral translation is well judged. I enjoyed it. If you like 'straight' science fiction, without humour or fantasy elements, but with plenty of action and inventiveness, you'll enjoy it too.

RORY DONNELLY

THE COCKPIT

KISEKI FILMS, KIS 94050, 60 mins approx. English subtitles.

Celebrating the career of Leiji Matsumoto, this video was released in Japan in 1994; if Kiseki and the BBFC had got their fingers out, it would have made a very suitable tie-in with that other anniversary this summer. The subject is 'war, and the pity of war'; Matsumoto shows himself as fascinated by the paraphenalia of warfare and the reactions of individuals. His heroes are torn by indecision, guilt and fear, powerless against the tides of their times but still struggling to make their individual stand against the collective madness. Matsumoto's influence on a generation of manga and anime creators has been immense, and its most marked effect in this video is that the three hugely talented directors of the individual segments - Kawajiri, Imanishi and Takahashi - are so absorbed in doing homage to Matsumoto-sensei that it's hard to distinguish between their work; each gives us the look and feel of Matsumoto's own style. Jonathan Clements' translation points out several ironies in the original script; in KNIGHT OF THE IRON DRAGON, for instance, Private Kodai, a comical hero, quotes from Emperor Hirohito's as-yet-unmade surrender speech, and goes on to comment that the Japanese army will "never retreat, whatever the orders might say... even if it takes two hundred bloody years ...It's the only way to a better world." To which his comrade replies "Are you sure about that?" The subtitles are clear and for the most part accurate, with a few minor typos which jar, like 'her' for 'here', but don't really break the flow. The hardware and backgrounds are accurate, the characters stylised in Matsumoto's usual manner, with Captain Harlock making an appearance as Rheindars in SLIPSTREAM. Because of its originator and its directors, as well as its timing, this is a landmark release, and it's well crafted; but Matsumoto isn't just documenting the heroic futility of war, he is in love with it, with the opportunity presented by the process for everyone, even comical little men, to achieve the stature of the tragic hero. He asks if all the young people who died in the war had lived another 30 years, what might they have achieved? Yet he presents the sacrifice of life or honour in a futile cause as noble, beautiful, karmic in its inevitability. The cannon-fodder get their tribute of respect in this bleak and beautiful video, but they remain cannon-fodder nonetheless, knowing their place in the scheme of things. A modern audience may find this alienating; I know I did.

HELEN McCARTHY

EUROPEAN RELEASES

THE LEGEND OF LEMNEAR

ANIME VIRTUAL, AV940100, PAL, French subtitled.

A girl out for revenge, a harem, wobbly breasts, escape, massive fight, bigger fight, the end. That about covers it, in an anime that's pretty, but also pretty shallow. It should come as no surprise that it's from the same team who brought us *Plastic Little*. Satoshi Urushihara and Kinji Yoshimoto seem like nice people, and it looks like they let someone work for a month on nothing but realistic fire modelling, which is the kind of attention to artistic detail that we haven't seen since *Akira*. There are probably a lot of animators who are using five-second segments from *Lemnear* in their resumés, but that doesn't mean it's any good as a whole. Like *Plastic Little*, it suffers from an oversimplification of fan demands. Realistically bouncing breasts and massive collateral damage will not

make an anime work. They can add to its appeal, just look at *Gunbuster*, but more discerning fans will demand plot and characterisation. Messrs U and Y are clearly masters of their craft, but masters to the extent that when given control of a production they will ignore many important aspects in order to concentrate on their beloved designs. What other excuse could there be for honky-tonk piano music in a fantasy tavern, or the stripped-down ending which has the credits rolling before the baddie's even cold? Uninteresting as anything but a fantastical prelude to *Plastic Little*, and a blot on the otherwise blemish-free copybook of producer Toru Miura, *Lemnear* is a disappointment.

Matters are not helped by subtitling that appears to have been done from a spotting list or internet translation. It's not as bad as Western Connection's efforts (it's on time), but there are several places where the French script-writer seems to prefer summary rather than translation. I hope Anime Virtual go onto better things; *Lemnear* was a bad choice as a first release.

JULIA SERTORI

RANMA ½: OAVS 3 and 4

KAZE ANIMATION, KV 940202, PAL, French subtitled, 60 mins approx.

A million Japanese people can't be wrong I suppose, but no matter how much you like *Ranma*, you'd have to admit that this release is a mixed bag. Part four is a great little high school knockabout, with *Ranma* taking on the yen-wielding vampiric sex-bomb kung-fu teacher Hinako, complete with sideswipes at the 'magical girl' genre, and some quasi-*Kekko Kamen* antics as the students try and get her angry in order to see her special attack. The preceding part three, however, falls really flat. Involving little more than the Byzantine machinations over who gets to cook dinner, it's not only uninteresting, but also of questionable political correctness. Women must be good cooks, and only good cooks can be good wives... Hmm... call me a cynic, but I'd rather the divine Ms Takahashi said something a little more worthwhile with her masterpiece/mouthpiece.

After some doubtful lines in the first episode, Kaze's subtitling has improved, but still falls short of the standard achieved in their *Iria* release. The songs are clumsily effected, this time with horizontally-scrolling subtitles; I fail to see why straightforward subtitling wouldn't do here. But these are mere niggles: Kaze's subtitling is still streets ahead of certain UK companies I could mention.

At least we get two episodes for our money's worth. Buying number three on its own, a less-than-dedicated *Ranma* fan would not have risked their cash on the superior episode four. But the *Ranma* OAVs as a whole suffer from an important problem: like the *Patlabor* movies before them, they are difficult to appreciate without prior knowledge of the series. Furthermore, they seem to assume that it suffices to continue the repetitive formulae of the TV series ad infinitum, without devoting much thought to the change in medium. OAV-viewers are not a casual TV audience, they are paying customers, and might eventually demand something more substantial.

JONATHAN CLEMENTS

IRIA: VOLUME 2

KAZE ANIMATION, KV 940402, PAL, French subtitles, 65 mins approx.

In this episode, Iria discovers that her mission to the Karma station 'did not take place', and that she's involved in a nasty cover-up. The pendant she took from Puttobaya turns out to have much more than sentimental value; it conceals an important memory chip, and everyone's favourite politician reveals all when subjected to torture by bungee-jumping. Meanwhile Zeiram is still in pursuit, but the action here centres on Iria's fight with human corruption.

As you probably know, there are two Irias: a live-action one played by Yoshiko Moriyama and an anime one played by Aya Hisakawa. Last year, some bright spark at *Newtype* thought it would be fun to put them in a room together and see how they got on... Big mistake. They were so frosty with each other you could have cracked them with a hammer, but Ms Hisakawa came out on top While Moriyama has to strut her stuff in plastic costumes, duking it out with unconvincing aliens in deserted Tokyo streets, Hisakawa wins all the honours, lending her voice to a wonderfully enjoyable performance.

Iria is so much better in an anime context. There's no budgetary need for the Earth setting; we can see her homeworld in all its glory. Keita Amemiya is obviously a big Terry Gilliam fan, designing fabulous sets and mecha that look like a mad collision between *Honneamise* and *Baron Munchausen*. Yoshihiro Yoshikawa's music works wonders, with the discordant opening song reprised throughout in an orchestral variation. No sappy bubblegum-pop tie-in for this production, that's for sure.

A good production all-round from the Japanese, especially since it appears to tie-in so effortlessly to the continuity of the film versions. Kaze Animation's French translation is genuinely faithful, proving once more that nothing is truly untranslatable if you put your mind to it. In lieu of an English version, you could do a lot worse than spend a few francs on this. You'll even learn the French for 'teleportation.'

JONATHAN CLEMENTS

U.S.A. RELEASES

SPACE BATTLESHIP YAMATO

VOYAGER ENTERTAINMENT, English subtitled, NTSC, 135 mins approx.

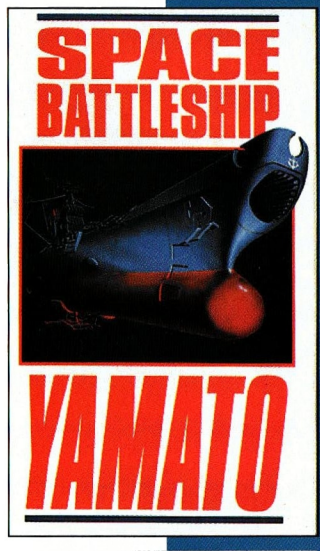
Despite a disturbing opening sequence (ie. there wasn't one), it's nice to hear the original Japanese version of the *Star Blazers* theme. However, the joy soon fades when Yamato is regarded in the cold critical light of jaded 90s anime-viewing eyes. While it is undeniably a crucial work in the progress of anime history, and compulsory viewing for anyone seeking to truly comprehend *Gunbuster*, *Silent Service* or even *Star Fleet* and *Robotech*, it simply isn't up to much.

Surely the true mark of a 'classic' is that it's timeless. *Yamato* certainly isn't: the characters are all plainly 70s fashion victims and the laws of astrophysics are indiscreetly ignored. Ships 'list' when holed in the hull and fighters are shot 'down', although in space there isn't supposed to be a 'down' for them to head for. The nationalist analogies are there for the taking. Not just the use of the *Yamato* as humanity's saviour *(why!?)*, but the naval and aerial sequences, clumsily transposed to a space setting. As Kenji Sato argued in his *Godzilla's, Yamato's and Our Democracy* (book review soon in AFX), any talk of 'saving the world' is really talk of 'saving Japan', with references such as the Earth Defence Force (as opposed to Japan's SDF), the suicide-mission to Iscander, and the Gamilus ships in red, white and blue.

But it's good for its time, with some genuinely moving scenes such as the heart-broken face of Dr Sado, standing behind the crew as they rejoice, unable to tell them that Catain Okita has passed away. An unavoidably important title and a compulsory inclusion in any research collection, but for this viewer it's a historical curiosity and nothing more.

JONATHAN CLEMENTS

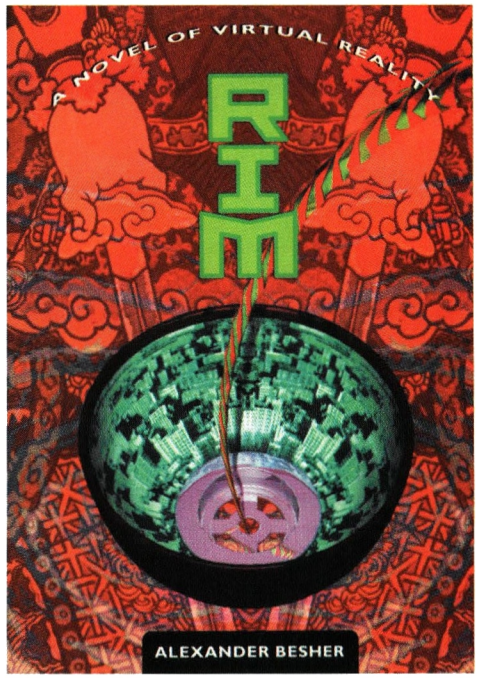
NE-CHAN'S FAVOURITE THIS MONTH IS: THE COCKPIT



RIM

A NOVEL OF VIRTUAL REALITY

BOOK SCAN



'She rode him hard, urgently, and scraped his sides with her nails like a coral reef push-pulling the tide. He didn't mind the burning sensation. He didn't mind being caught in the angry crosscurrent and forcibly dragged to the sandy bottom, where he drowned in the black whirlpool of her thighs.' Are you still with me? To earn my wages for this month's review I had to wade through over three hundred pages of similarly deathless prose, in Alexander Besher's lovingly designed, badly written and ultimately self-defeating sci-fi novel. Story: son trapped in cyberspace, father rescues him. Waffle: considerable. Pretentious Japlish puns: uncountable.

Besher has some great ideas. Japan as a virtual construct, data manifesting as concrete material, the concept of VR-dyslexia for those who spend too much time jacked in and computer crashes that trap VR-gamers in cyberspace. He also adds a certain spirituality to his book, drawing on Tibetan mythology for plenty of elements. Unfortunately, it's all wrapped up in the tired clichés of cyberpunk by an author who thinks that the way to be cool is to use a Japanese word on every line, or, failing that, a clumsy neologism. Its publishing history also gives a lot away, in that Besher's prose seems to be aimed at the limited, cliquey audience of white expats in Japan with a limited knowledge of Japanese, the unfulfilled wish to be fluent and diminished judgement as a result of deprivation from everyday English usage. Hence the cod-Zen philosophy, the pretentious display of linguistic (in)ability, and the scenes in which mere mortals reel in awe at the sound of someone who speaks fluent Foreign.

Have you ever heard anyone say: 'Did you watch that informational broadcast last night on the televisual apparatus?' Of course not, that sort of thing went out of good SF in the 1930s. How about: 'Did you see the news last night on TV?' That's a much more 1950s sentence, recognising that 'television' itself would be so commonplace as to be abbreviated. It's one small step from that to Robert Heinlein's much-copied practice of showing, rather than telling, using phrases such as 'the door dilated' to create a sense of otherness in his scenes. But surely, a 1990s Joe is more likely to say simply: 'Did you see the news last night?', taking the TV appearance as given. This is common knowledge to all the best writers, but not to Besher. He's still trapped somewhere in 1935, amateurishly sticking the lego blocks of his universe together, then trying to show off by knocking a letter off here and there. The literary world is full of people like him, continually doing their best to say something you don't understand so they can gain the frisson of hearing you ask them what they mean. However, few of these people have enough mates in Japan to get their scribblings printed in a magazine and then exported back home to a reading public. Here's a new law to bear in mind to save you money. If more than a certain percentage of the people thanked in the acknowledgements turn up on the back cover waxing lyrical about the book, you know that something fishy is going on.

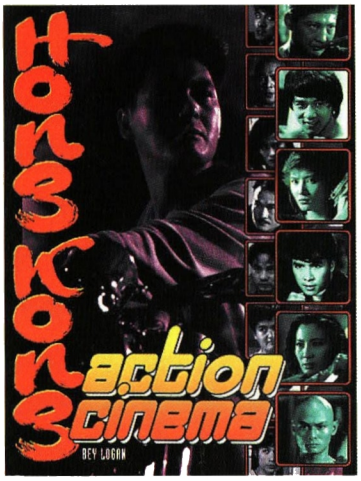
It takes substantial self-assurance to be a writer of any sort. You need to work on the assumption that someone will want to read your words, and so we're all egomaniacs to a greater or lesser degree. Besher, however, allows his ego to manifest itself in proselytising tangents, breaking up his narrative with desperate attempts to be clever. Page 79 has my favourite bit, in which a character speaks a Latin phrase and then wastes a paragraph in explaining it, for no discernible reason other than to show us that Besher is a very knowledgeable chap. Such displays come into their own in his use of Japanese, which, in the traditional mistake of bad writers the world over, always comes with a little translation attached. Of course, you must know dozens of foreigners who always say things in their native language first and then repeat it for you. Besher's book could be half as long if only the various characters realised that they didn't have to keep proving they were from another country.

Actually, the word 'characters' is a bit of a misnomer. In the two-dimensional world of bad characterisation, Japanese women are predatory nymphomaniacs, Englishmen all say 'I say', and Australians call you 'mate' all the time. Besher's main problem seems to be that he's not quite sure what kind of book he's writing, satire or serious fiction. Many of his vices would become virtues if *Rim* were a dedicated satire, but too many of its chapters fight (and fail) to be recognised as serious literature. Like Terry Pratchett, he's a fine 'ideas-man' working in a literary form which doesn't really display his talents. I'm thinking of works such as *Equal Rites*, which took an astoundingly well-argued anthropological thesis on the theory of magic and stuffed it unceremoniously into a package of lightweight humour. But unlike Pratchett, who was shunted into satire by accident with the success of *The Colour of Magic* after years in the wilderness, Besher has *volunteered* to work with stereotypical protagonists and derivative plotting. A *Conan* rip-off presented as a satire is funny; a *Neuromancer* rip-off presented as serious fiction is rather sad.

I have never seen the Japanese publication of *Rim*, although I imagine that it was a lot more interesting in Japanese, since the need to explain so many Japanese words would disappear. Unfortunately for the English-reading public, it's published over here in English, allegedly comprehensible to us all. My advice is to steer well clear, both of Besher and of girls with sandy bottoms.

JONATHAN CLEMENTS

Alexander Besher. *Rim: A Novel of Virtual Reality*. UK edition Orbit Books, 1995. US edition Harper Collins West 1994, ISBN 0-06-258527-4



"Hong Kong Action Cinema"

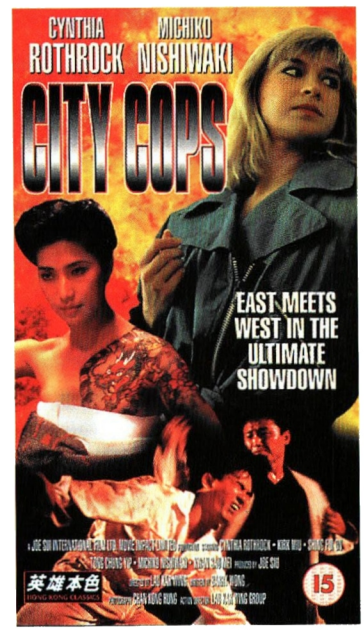
by Bey Logan, Titan, £14.99,

After the first two volumes from Eastern Heroes, "Impact" editor Bey Logan now gives us his spin on the scene, with this profusely illustrated large-format book. The book is divided into chapters, either on personalities like John Woo and Jackie Chan, or covering genres such as horror, heroic bloodshed, etc. This structure is a two-edged sword: while it does make the book more cohesive and readable, compared to the random grab-bag which was the "Best of Eastern Heroes", it may mean the confirmed fan will have less to learn, as it assumes little or no prior knowledge. However, the book still has something to offer everyone, especially if you think that HK action movie industry started with Bruce Lee. How it actually developed, the influence of Peking Opera, and the way in which the factions and dynasties tie together are all explained with clarity and insight by the author. The research throughout seems impeccable, at least as far as Hong Kong goes, though there are a couple of silly gaffes concerning the Western movie industry: Logan confuses "Empire" and "Premiere", and also the American R- and NC17-ratings. He also sticks mostly to facts, offering little in the way of opinion beyond a few top ten lists. On balance, this is probably wise, as the book thus avoids going over the same ground as Rick Baker's "Essential Guide to Hong Kong Movies". One surprising omission is the lack of any significant mention of adult, of "Category III" movies, with their concentration on sex and violence. They have virtually kept the Hong Kong industry afloat over the past few years but you'll look in vain for titles like "Naked Killers", "Bunman" or "Men Behind the Sun". Perhaps distributors Titan feared the book might be consigned to the top shelf, as the illustrations accompanying such a section would unquestionably have to be on the racy side! More generally, the book has plenty of photos throughout, both in colour and black-and-white, which go some way to justifying the fifteen pound price tag. This is hefty for a paperback of less than 200 pages, and perhaps represents the book's most limiting factor. At that level of price, I'd be looking for a tome of lasting value, and while "Hong Kong Action Movies" is an informative and enjoyable read, and a good introduction to the field, I don't think it is one I'll refer back to very often.

City Cops

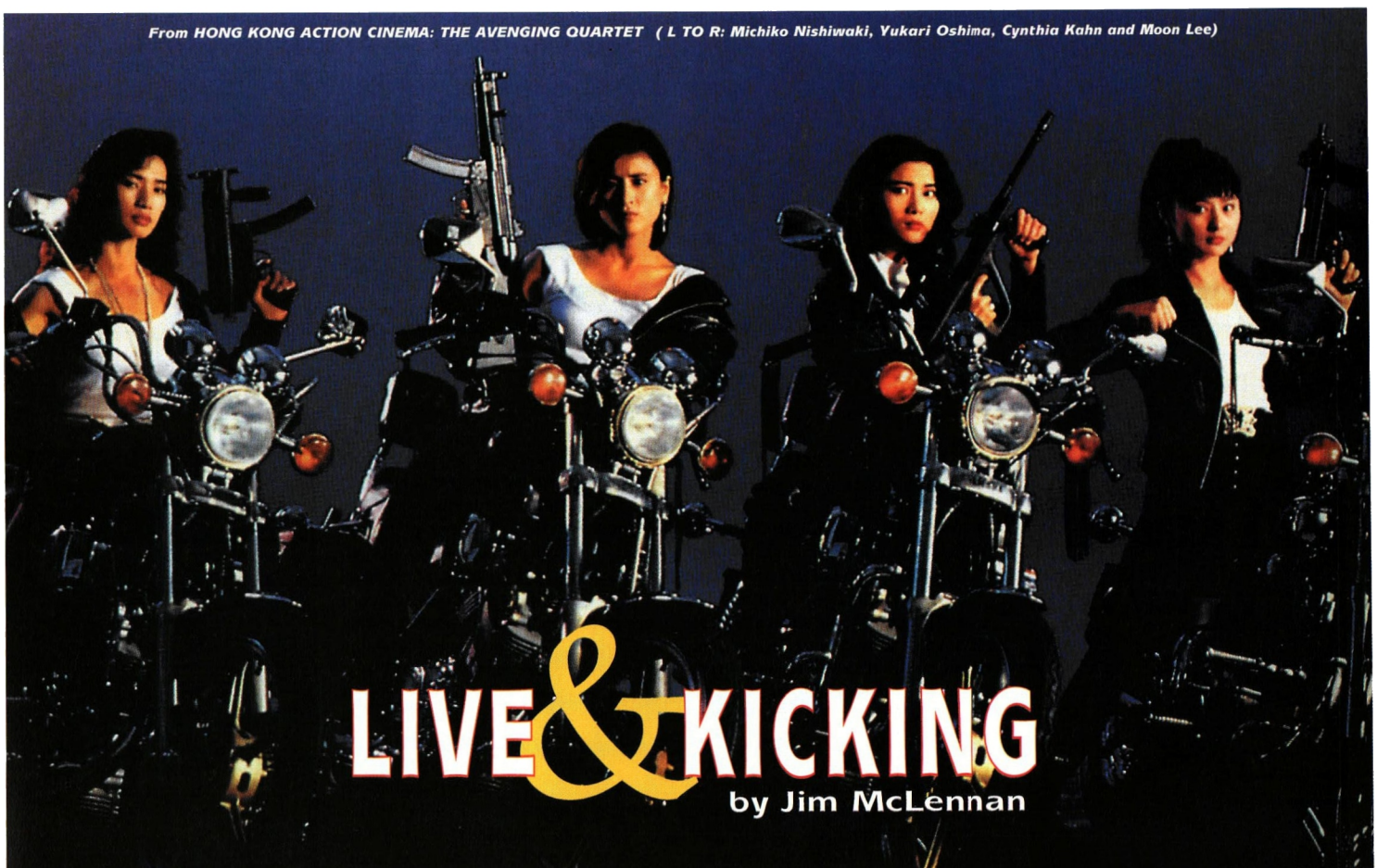
(Hong Kong Classics, £12.99)

Given the depth of female talent in Hong Kong cinema, it's slightly ironic that the best known actress in the genre is American Cynthia Rothrock. This video queen (has *anyone* ever seen one of her movies at the cinema?) first had success in the Far East, before returning to Hollywood and achieving breakthrough success in films like "China O'Brien", under Robert Clouse, director of "Enter the Dragon". In many ways, early movies like "The MagicCrystal" are superior to her more recent efforts, perhaps because her rather limited acting talents are less tested, so are not found wanting."City Cops" dates back to 1989, putting it relatively early in the Rothrock canon. However, it has previously been released here as "Above the Law", so let the buyer beware: it took me some time to work out why I had this strong sense of deja-vu. You should also beware if, going by the sleeve, you expect significant amounts of Michiko Nishiwaki. Despite second billing and conspicuous cover portrait, she doesn't appear until an hour into the movie. This probably explains why the aforementioned cover picture is swiped from a totally different film - "God of Gamblers", to be precise. Somuch for truth in advertising. These qualms aside, what we get is a fairly low-key Rothrock movie, which concentrates more on comedy rather than action, save for a decent end fight in a warehouse. Hong Kong humour, save Jackie Chan and Samo Hung, is not a genre



that travels well, and there's hardly a chuckle to be had here. Maybe the most interesting thing is seeing Cynthia's attempts to look sexy in a skimpy vest, prefiguring her recent moves towards the "erotic thriller"market. Mind you, that prospect in itself is about as eagerly anticipated as seeing Greta Scacchi try her hand at a kick-boxing film, so maybe "CityCops" isn't THAT bad after all... There's a friend of mine who avidly consumes everything that Rothrock does,and I'm sure he'll enjoy "City Cops". But I really don't think it's going to get her any new fans, and those without such an obsession would be better off holding onto their cash.

JIM McLENNAN


From HONG KONG ACTION CINEMA: THE AVENGING QUARTET (L TO R: Michiko Nishiwaki, Yukari Oshima, Cynthia Kahn and Moon Lee)
LIVE & KICKING
by Jim McLennan

ANIMAIL is YOUR forum for your views, questions or comments on the anime and manga scene. Send your letters to ANIMAIL, AFX, 70 Mortimer Street, London W1N 7DF, UK. If you'd like a personal reply please enclose a self-addressed envelope with UK postage, or two International Reply Coupons for overseas postage. Please note that our Post Office will not accept foreign stamps for postage of replies from the UK.

Dear Helen,
First of all, I must say that I'm glad ANIME FX is in full colour now! I didn't miss colour pictures before, but I now love to see the colours (hair, dresses and so on) of my favourite anime charas as well as the ones of the new films. (Makes it easier to recognise things I saw in Japanese magazines!) Still, I don't mind b/w pictures when the articles are well done and informative, as yours are.

I'm writing because of the letter of Jay Felton, London - yes, again because of the ROBIN HOOD series! Ms Felton should have been patient! Gilbert didn't die; he disappeared in episode 16 and was declared dead (no body was ever found), but in episode 22 he came back, first like a ghost, but then it becomes clear that the "magic of the forest" (a strong wind) had saved him from falling to his death. He never was completely a "bad guy", even though he does things no "good guy" would ever consider. He is still alive in the last episode (#52) after a "magical healing" by the forest that involved Robin, Marian and Clio (Gilbert's sister).

The series isn't broadcast now but RTL repeats all the series it has after a short while. So maybe Ms Felton (and you!) will get a second chance!

I'm glad to know that ROBIN HOOD is made by Ippei Kuri. I also found out a bit : it was made in 1990 by Tatsunoko Production co. & Interfilm. It seems to be a Japanese/Italian co-production.

Please keep up the good work!
HELLA KROEGER, Neunkirchen, Germany.

Dear ANIME FX,
Just a quick note to share something amazing with you. I was in my little local library (Woodbridge) the other day, glancing through the video-tapes, and in the family section I found Anime Projects' video of OH! MY GODDESS! 1 : MOONLIGHT AND CHERRY BLOSSOM. Apparently there are three tapes available in Suffolk County libraries - and the terms & conditions of Anime Projects' tapes do not preclude hire, unlike many anime videos.

On a related theme, my six-year-old daughter Philippa (known as Pippa) drew a wonderful picture of Belldandy recently (I have some OMG videos and OMG manga) and I thought it might be suitable for your EYECATCH feature (perhaps it could intiate the junior section!) Hope you like it.

Yours sincerely,
MARTIN RUSS, Ipswich, Suffolk, UK.

HELEN : *Pippa certainly is a talented young lady! Glad to hear she's enjoying anime with you, and that some local authorities have an intelligent attitude to library stocks.*

Dear ANIME FX,
I've just bought Anime FX for the first time. My hobby is drawing so I have a great interest in artwork. The artwork featured in your magazine is a breath of fresh air, I've never seen anything like it in my life.

From reading your magazine, I rushed out and bought a few Manga videos, which blew me away. I'm used to Disney films, so after watching OVERFIEND II my brain has never quite been the same. I'm now completely hooked within a week, committed to drawing and viewing anime. Could you please suggest a good source of reference so that I may continue drawing and learning about anime, such help would be invaluable.
From a brand new, gleamingly, shiny new fan,
DAVID JEFFREYS, Swansea, Wales.

HELEN : *I remember that feeling! I hope you'll never lose touch with the sense of wonder that anime and manga provide. I'm sending you a list of ideas for further research, but I also suggest that you write to some congenial-sounding fellow-fans from our Penpals column, attend a convention or two to show your art to other fans, and very definitely get some back issues of ANIME FX to see more of the range and variety of styles and designs in anime. Keep having fun!*

Dear Helen,
I would love to buy TOKYO BABYLON, BATTLE ANGEL ALITA, APPLESEED, 3 x 3 EYES, CYBER CITY OEDO, and more. But I can't because of no English subtitles!

The reason is that I am deaf. I can't hear, but I can read, so the English subtitles are very useful to me! I do enjoy watching BUBBLE GUM CRISIS, DEVIL HUNTER YOHKO and GUNBUSTER.
PHILIP TURVEY, Doncaster, S. Yorks., UK

HELEN : *When only one version of a tape is released, people can miss out - the blind on subtitled-only material, the deaf on dubbed-only versions. The only two ideas I can offer you, Philip, are to try and get hold of a multi-standard or NTSC playback video, so that you can mail-order tapes from the USA - many of the titles which are only available as dubs in this country are subtitled in America, like DANGAIO and CYBER CITY OEDO 808 - or to contact an anime club; some keep subtitled versions of tapes in their club libraries, or provide script translations to help out members in your position. Look through your AFX/AUK back issues and you'll find plenty of club and mail-order addresses; and the Internet is another good source of information if you have access to it. You're not too far from the Sheffield Space Centre, renowned for its great stock and friendly staff, so why not drop them a line or even go up there - maybe with a hearing friend to interpret, since I don't know if they have a sign-speaker on the staff?*

Dear Helen,
I am writing to thank you for your initial support. Perhaps you do not remember me; I wrote to you over a year ago telling you that I was planning to do an A-Level critical study on anime and manga. The study was completed along with a video and was very successful. I have now gained a place in Art Foundation where I hope to practice animation and continue criticisms of anime and manga. Your prompt reply to my plea for information was thoroughly inspiring and gave my project direction. It would not have received the praise it got were it not for your encouragement.

I have just received a free copy of ANIME FX; I nearly committed ritual suicide when I saw (and drooled over) the full colour and amazing new format. I regret to say that my budget cannot handle a subscription payment as a lump sum, but I can assure you I shall purchase every copy. Please do not forget that many independent newsagents stock ANIME FX; I buy my copy at a local independent stockist.

I read a letter in ANIMAIL saying that DEVIL HUNTER YOKO was overpriced for a 45 minute animation. I purchased this video to find that there were two episodes (2 & 3) and it was much longer than the stated 45 minutes. I' m also a terrific DEVIL HUNTER YOKO fan and I must ask whether the new DEVIL HUNTER OAVs will be released in the UK. I've seen much of the 'stills' and designs from VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU; will there be a release in the original Japanese, be it manga or anime?

Love and gratitude,
STEVEN BISHOP-WYLDE, Cardiff, Glamorgan, Wales

HELEN : *It's always good to hear that one of the ever-increasing number of students who contact us for help with their work has been successful. I'm delighted to hear you did so well and am very glad that we were able to help you get started. Your hard work and enthusiasm have got the results they deserved - congratulations! And I'm glad you like our new look. There are no plans as yet to release the new YOKO OAVs, though YOKO 4 & 5 are on Western Connection's release list. As for VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU, the best way to get the Japanese dub of the anime is to buy the superb American release from*

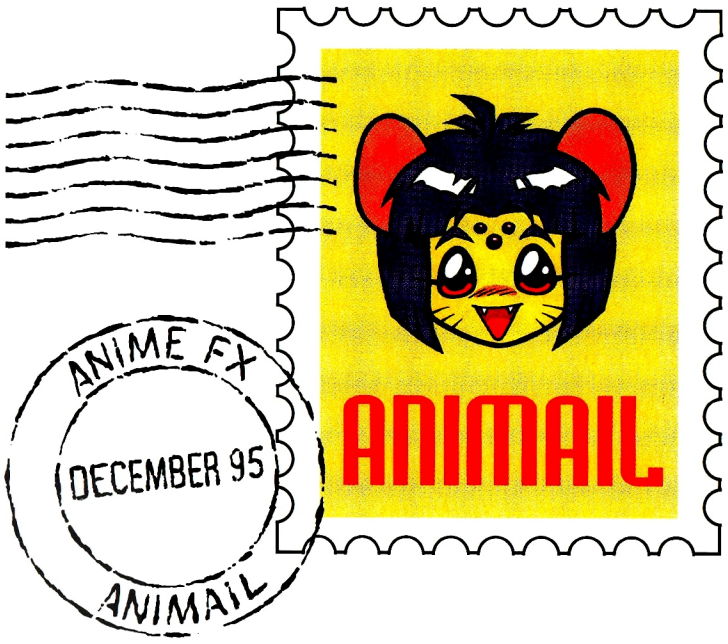
AnimEigo, with their usual excellent liner notes. You need an NTSC playback video to watch it, but it is superb. The manga is hard to find in Japanese as it's a fairly old title, but a good Japanese bookseller like Books Nippon in London might be able to help you. The Antarctic Press translated release is available from good comic shops, or from AP on subscription.

Dear ANIME FX,
I would like information on what the heck I have to do to become a manga author! I have plans on a new series under the sci-fi category, but I can use some help.
JASON POAGE, Westchester, Ohio, USA.

HELEN : *Writing for comics is something a huge number of people would like to do, and very few succeed. The ones who do have two vital qualities - persistence and adaptability. Originality and talent help, but there are lots of original talents out there who just don't have the push to keep going until they finally make the breakthrough. Unless you already read and write fluent Japanese, or know a very good translator, I would suggest you try breaking in to American comics first. Why? Simply consider things from the point of view of a Japanese manga publisher. Dealing by mail, phone and fax with someone from another country who doesn't speak your language is an extra hassle; if you already have thousands of eager wannabe artist/writers who do speak your language and are right on the spot, why give yourself extra hassle? If, on the other hand, you see the published work of an established professional which you know has already had some success, you're a bit more certain of getting a return for your time, trouble and expense. So I'd say it's a good idea to start in your home market. Get on to American comic companies first and get their reactions. Even if you get rejections to begin with, study any advice you're given carefully and never stop striving to improve your work. Antarctic Press have a well-deserved good rep for helping young hopefuls break in to the comics world and they have always encouraged manga-style artists and writers. And if there are any other comic companies printing the kind of work you'd like to do, contact them too. You can find any company's address in their comics, usually near the editorial section.*

Dear Helen,
I noticed that you have a fanzine review in each issue. Can you get an evaluation on your artwork even if it's not from a fanzine, if you send in photocopies with an sae? Or is this facility only for established artists? If you have the time I'd love to dump a few strips on you for critical appraisal in the future. Sigh ... I give up on this 'trying to get your pic into AFX' business!
All the best,
JEZZ ANDERSON, Aberdeen, Grampian, Scotland

HELEN : *Read my reply to Jason Poage, above, on the importance of persistence. We get dozens of pieces of artwork every week and can't possibly print them all; keep trying and you'll get there sometime! As for the fanzine reviews, they are just guidelines to try and give readers an idea of what they'll get for their money and whether or not they might enjoy the zine; the critiques I send to fanzine editors, at their request and for their private information, are much more detailed, technical and hard-hitting. You are welcome to send in some artwork for an evaluation if you wish - we always try to help out new artists and writers as much as we can - but remember the old saying "Beware of asking for something, you just might get it"! If you ask for my critical opinion, you're going to get exactly that, with complete honesty, because that's the only way I can be any help to you at all. A few people have been known to run whingeing to Mum for sympathy after getting one of my critiques; most, however, have taken my comments in the spirit in which they are intended and used my criticism to improve their work. So come on, Jezz, let's see that artwork!*



Dear Helen,
Why do subtitled videos (ie BUBBLEGUM CRISIS, £21.99) cost more than dubbed videos?
STEVEN LARKIN, Ottershaw, Surrey, UK

HELEN : *Well, in the case of BUBBLEGUM CRISIS you're quoting a very old price, as Nigel of Anime Projects will tell you - you can now buy the Knight Sabers subtitled for £12.99 a tape. But, in general, while subtitled videos cost less to produce than dubbed, they sell far fewer copies; so they cost more per unit to produce and market, and in order to keep the same profit margin per unit, the video company has to charge more per unit. If more people bought subtitled tapes consistently, the costs per unit sold would reduce and the average price would eventually come down.*

Dear Helen,
The review of THE MANGA PLAYGROUND in ANIME FX was a big surprise, especially as it was so flattering. I like the way Steve Kyte turned it into a general review of what makes manga-style different from Western comics and I really hope people who read the review are encouraged to draw their own stuff. I always attempt to encourage those who contact me and 'confess' (always bashfully) that they like to draw manga-style. The more people who publish their own fanzines of artwork, the more latent talent will be discovered, and it won't be long before TV production companies in the UK will pick up on the more creative material produced thereby. Manga is the idea source of anime.

GANGWAY!
Stand in Midori's way at your peril. (From Akira Toriyama's DR. SLUMP)

One thing I've learnt to appreciate while doing THE MANGA PLAYGROUND is the qualities and attractive subtleties of texture and shade in black and white artwork, so your announcement that ANIME FX is now full colour on every page had me quite worried! Please don't neglect us poor black and whiters toiling away with scritchy scratching inkpens bought in Woolworths. All the Japanese anime magazines have monochrome inserts on newsprint paper and I am enormously fond of the fan art sections there.

I shall end by saying that no matter what you call your magazine, if the right people work on it for the best of reasons (enthusiasm, deep fondness, etc) then ANIME FX will always be a joy to read (even if a bit crumpled in transit).
MARTYN BROWN, Plymouth, Devon, UK

HELEN : *I hope Steve's continued printing of black and white artwork along with the colour stuff has reassured you by now, Martyn. Many people don't realise that the simpler something is, the harder it is to get it right - and that's not just my opinion; Haruhiko Mikimoto said so in his interview back in issue #7! Good black and white art requires great skill and care, and you only get to be good, or to improve, by doing it - the more you practice your art, the better you'll get. So come on, dojinshi artists of the West - let's see more of your work!*

Dear Helen & co.,
Congratulations for ANIME FX magazine; it is simply superb in full colour. To be honest, it is the ONLY English language magazine (being the best one) that I buy monthly together with HOBBY JAPAN and NEWTYPE.

In Malta we watch an average of 6 different anime TV series daily, thanks to Italian TV channels which broadcast anime. Please allow me to say here (regarding the Sub or Dub debate) that Italian dubbing is the best; they take anime very seriously.

Will there ever be a full-colour article on GENESIS CLIMBER MOSPEADA in ANIME FX?
PATRICK SACCO, Paola, Malta

HELEN : *Lucky you, and lucky Italy! There are some countries in the world that take an intelligent attitude to anime on TV, thank goodness. And to think that Italy and Malta share the same video format as the UK ... We may well run a MOSPEADA article sometime in the future; the older shows are very important to us, both as the foundation on which modern anime is built, and as good entertainment in their own right. But it takes more time to research older shows - Japanese material is harder to come by and pictures harder to source. So be patient, please!*

Dear Helen,
In your latest issue of ANIME FX (6) there is a picture of Leona in civilian dress. I have every TANK POLICE episode and I can't remember that ever happening, Is this from another TANK POLICE OAV or has it been cut from the 'new' series?

How about doing a feature on the voice actors for English dubbed anime (eg Toni Barry - I think that's how you spell it!) You do similar things for Japanese voice actors but hardly anyone here understands the language anyway!

And finally, how come you never print photos of yourself? I'm sure other people want to know what you look like too!
IAN HIGTON, Grove, Wantage, Oxon, UK

HELEN : *I don't know if MV made any cuts in the new DOMINION eps but the pic of Leona looking cute in shorts and vest is from some Japanese publicity material for the new series release. Oddly enough, many English language voice actors are uncredited for their work at their own request, or use assumed names; but our own Jim Swallow is working on an article on 'English language seiyuu'. And if you'd ever seen a picture of me you wouldn't have to ask why I don't print them!*

Just for you Doug, here's AB mode Ne-chan ready for a night on the town

Dear Helen,
Please thank Yasuhiro and Machiko Nakamura of AIDE Shinbun for giving us the chance of contacting Japanese fans. It is a marvellous opportunity!
LLOYD BURR, Norwich, Norfolk, UK

HELEN : *It's a pleasure to thank our friends at AIDE Shinbun in public for all their efforts to help fans stay in touch with each other, in Japan and round the world.*

Dear ANIME FX,
Will there ever be a team-up battle between Ironfist Chinmi and Ranma? And will KILLER INSTINCT ever be made into a manga cartoon?
Keep up the good work.
MARC NEW, Edinburgh, Scotland.

HELEN : *Ironfist Chinmi and Ranma were created by different artists, and the manga published by different publishers. It's not usual for two characters from completely different artists and publishers to 'team up' for a story in a professional magazine; it might happen in a fan parody or dojinshi, but most of these never get translated into English so you might never see it. (If you think about it, even in American comics, team-ups usually only happen between characters owned by the same publisher!) As for KILLER INSTINCT, any material can inspire a manga or anime version, but we haven't heard of any definite plans for this one as we go to press.*

Dear Helen & ANIME FX,
I have criticisms, compliments and questions.

First let's get rid of those nasty criticisms. I noticed in the report of STREETFIGHTER II THE ANIMATED MOVIE that there were several differences from the story in the video. How come?

Of course I'd be a complete fool if I didn't mention that the new-look ANIME FX is simply brilliant, but I am glad to see that your reviews are as good as ever. I also liked the Games Capsule on the Sony Playstation and I hope you will be reviewing some of the other next generation systems.

And finally my questions :
1) Do you know what John Spencer is doing now?
2) Why do we never see Ne-Chan in her gorgeous AB mode?
3) Will Sony be releasing the new STREETFIGHTER II : THE ANIMATED MOVIE soundtrack on CD or cassette?
4) Who does Ne-Chan hang out with?
5) Can you name some good anime that will be available for Christmas?

Yours sincerely,
DOUGLAS RAE, Inverheilor, Angus, Scotland.

P.S.: In SFII THE ANIMATED MOVIE me and my brother Steven noticed Akuma sitting up against a wall in the background of Calcutta, India!
P.P.S. : NE-CHAN RULES! OK!!

HELEN : *One of the problems of working several months ahead is that up-to-the-minute information isn't always available. Our SFII feature was prepared using published Japanese book and manga sources but the final edit of the movie wasn't available to our writers and translators at that time, hence the variations. We can't promise this will never happen - that's the price we pay for trying to stay right up to date! - but we do our best, like all publications, to keep errors to a minimum. As for Games Capsule, Paul Watson has plans to review as many new systems as he can get his hands on. And to answer your questions : John Spencer is working on the technical side of the print industry and gaining experience on new systems. Ne-chan's AB mode has not been forgotten - we had an Andy Hepworth pic last issue, and Mr. Kyte has a few surprises up his sleeve for the future! I'm sure the music for the US/UK SFII release will be out on CD soon, and a few specialist importers may also have the Japanese soundtrack for true aficionados. Ne-chan likes to hang out in Soho's coffee shops with her girlfriends after work, and also spends a lot of time at home with her large family. Good anime for Christmas? Just turn to the review pages! But if you want personal recommendations, I think the PATLABOR two-movie tape from Manga Video is a good evening's holiday viewing, and Kaze Animation's excellent IRIA : ZEIRAM THE ANIMATION is a favourite of Ne-chan's (yes, she squeaks fluent French!), while Spongley favours the RANMA 1/2 OAVs from Viz (NTSC) or Kaze (PAL/French sub).*

SPECIAL NOTE TO READERS WITH QUESTIONS TO ASK

We always do our best to answer your anime and manga questions. However, we receive far too many letters to print every one and reply to it on this page, especially since new readers often ask questions that have already been answered in earlier issues. If you have any anime or manga questions, send us a stamped, self addressed envelope (or an International Reply Coupon if you live outside the UK) and we'll send you a personal reply. Please remember - we can't reply without your FULL address!

SOAP BOX

Our J.A.I.L.E.D. correspondence has provoked quite a response. Here's one of the most interesting and challenging letters, plus the subject's reply!

Dear Helen,
I felt that I just had to reply to Peter Evans' letter in the Soapbox in issue #6.

Peter Evans is in a very privileged position. First of all he lives in Japan, and can get virtually any titles that he wants by taking a trip into Tokyo.

Second, yes, he has taken the time out to learn the language, and not everyone has the time or the facilities to learn a second language. I myself have just spent the last 4 years in fulltime education learning a trade, and have not had the time for another course.

Thirdly, money. Most Japanese imports suffer from a massive markup when they reach this country, and Laserdisks are no exception. The LD players that can handle NTSC disks are available in the UK, but they are very expensive. I would imagine that these are both notably cheaper in Japan (in fact some Laserdisks are cheaper than the corresponding videotapes).
No, I do not own three VTRs, in fact I have to borrow my parents' unit if I want to watch anything, and until I find employment and pay off my student loans this will continue to be the case.

Peter's main flaw seems to be his inability to see things from this side of the world. Most of the dubs that appear in the UK are of dubious quality, and many of the fans in the UK have turned their backs on the home products, bought NTSC VCRs and get their tapes directly from America.

Until I am able to go into a local shop and buy reasonable quality dubs of many of the top Japanese titles, I will continue to support fan subtitling. After all, without these guys most of us would not be in the fandom, and the American and UK markets would not exist in the form they are today.

All this, and not a single "F" word!

DAVE (Porco) ROSS(o),
South Shields, Tyne & Wear, UK.

PETER REPLIES:
Mr. Ross is indeed correct. Polite too. I get so many flames in my email about my stance on fan-subbing that this letter makes a refreshing change.
Points one and two : I do indeed live in Japan, where access to various titles is substantially easier than in other countries. I learned my Japanese 'on the job' as it were. although a little of it was picked up in evening classes at Sheffield University. (I did not come here for anime alone; the job, however, is a means to achieve that end.) Having lived here, continuously, for 3 years, 6 months, 4 days and 8 hours (at the time of writing) my viewpoint is distorted beyond that of the "would-be otaku" in the UK.

Point three : **Money** is of course the big sticking point for fans. Especially those on a shoestring budget, such as students and the unemployed. "I can't afford to buy it so I will copy it" is poor justification for what is essentially an illegal act. I have a stock phrase here, that I know you will hate : "Anime is expensive". It is a corruption of the usual "Japan is expensive" that I will now make a vain effort to justify.

In Japan, the cost of living is so high the the industry can get away with charging so much for their products. They have to do this because a side effect of the high cost of living is that salaries have to be commensurate with it. A vicious circle that will take some breaking. This makes some things *seem* cheap, like electronic toys and the media that you feed them with. Exporting these to a country with a much lower cost of living makes them *seem* expensive. Then you add on the unscrupulous middlemen taking their huge cuts and the prices are simply astral. (Net fiends need only look at rec.arts.anime.marketplace for proof.)

SIDE NOTE : LDs are cheaper than VT because the videos are destined for the rental market, not the collectors. A lot of shops don't even sell pre-recorded videos! For a typical porn title, the VT will be around 15,000 yen and the matching LD, released one or two months later, will be around 7,000 yen.

Bonus extra : "Special Price" LDs of classic titles have been released, such as CASTLE OF CAGLIOSTRO, MY YOUTH IN ARCADIA, FIST OF THE NORTH STAR. At around 4,000 yen for a full-length movie, these are a bargain.

Companies that release anime outside Japan realise this and they price their products accordingly. Even subtitled tapes like AAA MEGAMISAMA with their lower volume and higher prices now sell for around £12.99 in the UK, and some mainstream titles like THE GUYVER are just £5.99. US video prices are a bit higher but there is a growing range of titles there in the $10-$20 price bracket. People in Japan can't believe their eyes when they see how cheap the foreign version is. So, here in Japan, we are being screwed by the makers. Those who import from Japan, similarly so. Just like life!

But I digress. The flexible moral standards of the average student do not surprise me. I would probably have been as bad, had I not been into hacking the university's PRIME computers when I was a lad, all those years ago.

Your justification for fan subbing is nothing new. Neither is my response. To whit :

1. Many Japanese titles will never be released abroad. There are any number of reasons why :
~ it might be a niche title. For example, you will never see OTOHIME CONNECTION or ELEMETALORS on the shelves. One is shojo-anime, and as we all know the definitive anime fan is a male student with no girl-friend. [Fan, not casual user, answers on a postcard please ...] The other is an art film and needs a reasonable understanding of the manga or it will just pass you by.

~ The company that made it may have vanished. (BAVI STOCK springs to mind.)

~ The company that owns the rights may have disintegrated and the actual owner of the rights may be impossible to trace.

~ Foreign companies may not be interested in buying the title. It might be "lame", "plot-free" or badly animated.

~ The company that owns it may not be interested in allowing some foreigner to bastardize their favourite child. (Can we say GUNDAM here?)

2. Fan subtitling has never been legal and will not become so in the foreseeable future. If you own an original work then you are probably entitled to a copy in a language that you can understand. Distribution of same, however, is right out.

3. If you can't afford your chosen hobby, get a cheaper one.

If this last one sounds callous then I am sorry, but that is the way of the world. I will not support or even tacitly condone an activity that works to do my friends out of their income.

Yours in Japan, knowing that he has provoked even more flames ...

P.S. : You did use an "F" word. Several in fact. "felt, "first", "facilities", "full", "fan" and so on. But I know what you meant and praise you for not resorting to obscenities.

FANZINE FILE

Issue 5 of BRITISH MANGA came out in September; it offers 54 A5 pages of dojinshi by UK artists and snippets of Japanese information for £1. The absence of a contents listing means you have no option but to dive straight in and it isn't always clear who wrote and drew each of the 6 strips; nor is there any information on what happened before, so if you don't like coming into stories in the middle you need to get the earlier issues too. There's a range of styles and subjects, but the reproduction (photocopying) is not really suitable for most of the work involved; editor James Taylor needs to persuade his artists to take account of how their work will be reduced and reproduced. Damian Quinn's BO AND KATANA and Stephen Brennan's ORDINARY JAPANESE SCHOOLGIRL DOT are particularly badly served, turning into black smudgy messes for the most part. For Quinn this is a real problem as his work, which is quite well drawn and features some very interesting panels and angles, is heavy on shading which separates in photocopying and spoils his efforts. However there's a lot of energy and

enthusiasm in BRITISH MANGA, and the list of Japanese publishers' addresses in romaji in the back is worth many times the price of the zine in translation charges. Get a copy (and ask about back issues) from: ***James Taylor, 95 Waverley Road, Harrow, Middx, HA2 9RQ, UK.***

SPECIAL SLUMP FANZINE is editor Juan Luis Manzano Martin's homage to Akira Toriyama's pre-DRAGONBALL hit series and is a must-have even if you don't read Spanish. Beautifully designed and packed with great pictures from the manga, it contains masses of information which can be extracted with a bit of effort even by the linguistically challenged - like romanised titles and dates of publication for his other works, a SLUMP episode listing, character names and biographies and information about the European incarnations of the SLUMP mythos. Nos 1-3 are now available. Juan Luis is happy to receive enquiries and reply in English, so write now for details to: ***Juan Luis Manzano Martin, SSF, calle Isabel Garau 72, 1 , 07458 Ca'n Picafort, Illes Balears, Spain.***

THE MANGA PLAYGROUND number 4, the summer 95 issue, arrived and promptly vanished as Steve took it away to read at his leisure. Then he said "Why don't you review it this time - it's good to have different viewpoints on things." So I got to read it too. Looking back over Martyn Brown's year of hard work, the improvement in his art is evident; but the greater technical facility that always comes with practice hasn't destroyed any of the inherent charm and originality of his art. Better drawing, clearer and more coherent panel construction and shading, and attention to such details as page numbering and margins make THE MANGA PLAYGROUND easy to read, but the pleasure comes from Martyn Brown's quirky, original stories and characters and the way he merges classic fantasy and folklore themes and influences from his own culture with those of Japan to produce a unique collection of five very different strips. TRANSDIMENSIONAL SCHOOLGIRL X, manga meets the Chalet School, reaches its end in this issue - 'for now', as the last panel of a charming super-deformed snowfight coda promises (or

threatens?) - and a new story, ALL THE RAGE, opens by introducing its main protagonist, pathological teenage tennis player and wannabe tournament star Jasmine; the other three strips continue. Once again writer/artist/editor Brown manages to give each story its own distinctive'feel' and impact, and produces sixty - yes, *sixty* - pages of clean, easy-to-follow panel layouts and tiny but highly enjoyable details like the freephone number on a TV screen in DOOR-TO-DOOR DORA. His freefall perspective cover is a stunner - not many UK fan artists have either the daring to plan such a detailed and complex piece or the patience to complete it in such detail. His editorial, a discussion of flipping and retouch in manga translation, is short, to the point and interesting. And there are no misspellings or grammatical errors except in the interests of characterisation. In fact, I can't find a thing to fault in this original, well crafted and enjoyable fanzine. Even the cover price of £3.50 is justified - you get what you pay for. Mine may be a different viewpoint than Steve's but I've come to the same conclusion - THE MANGA PLAYGROUND is the best dojinshi in the UK today and if you don't buy it you are missing out on a highly original talent. Write for mail order details to: ***M. Brown, 6 Elliott Street, The Hoe, Plymouth, Devon, PL1 2PP, UK.***

CLUB CORNER

ANIME HASSHIN

To quote its latest membership directory "Anime Hasshin has 370 members from 12 countries on 5 continents. The sun never sets on Anime Hasshin!" Why is it so successful? Because it's an absolutely wonderful anime club. We get all ANIME HASSHIN's mailings of club newsletter THE ROSE thanks to the kindness of its indefatigable editor/co-ordinator Lorraine Savage, and they are among the best mailings we get from <u>any</u> source, fan or professional, Western or Japanese - packed with superb information, opinion, letters and the goofy items fans love like filks and jokes. THE ROSE comes out four times a year. Members can also get synopsis packets, packed with an assortment of articles, synopses, and other information on all kinds of anime and manga topics. A list of movie traders is available to members only, and contacts with other clubs are maintained so AH members get to hear about their activities too. All of this superb stuff is organised, produced and mailed efficiently and to very high standards for ludicrously reasonable prices. There are many excellent anime clubs which provide great service for local members, with meetings and newsletters, but not many which are truly international; this is one of the few. Any anime fan who isn't an ANIME

FAN SCENE

HASSHIN member is missing out. If this is you, then remedy the situation by writing now to: ***ANIME HASSHIN, Lorraine Savage, PO Box 391036, Cambridge, MA 02139-0011, USA***.
Membership is $15 US, $16 Canada, $20 overseas; sample issues of THE ROSE $5 North America, $6 overseas; all payments in US funds please.

CONVENTION LISTING 1996

Mar 2 FANIME CON 96, PO Box 642028, San Jose, CA 95164-2028, USA, email abunai@IBM.NET, no further details as yet.

Mar 8-10 KATSUCON NI, PO Box 11582, Blacksburg VA USA, 24062-1582,
email Katsucon@vtserf.cc.vt.edu. Guests Steve Bennett, Studio Go!, and more.

May 31-Jun 2 PROJECT A-KON 7, 3352 Broadway, Ste. 470, garland, TX 75043, USA,
email phoneix@pic.net. Guests Ben Dunn, Tavisha Wolfgarth, Rosearik Rikki, Neil Nadelman and more.

June 28-30 ANIME EXPO 96 celebrates the fifth anniversary of California's dedicated anime conventions at the excellent Anaheim Marriott Hotel & Convention Centre (near Disneyland & Mile High Comics!) Guests TBA (last year's AX was positively <u>*stuffed*</u> with anime stars), lots of fun guaranteed. For more info call (+ 310) 268 8454.

MIND BREAK

Test your anime and manga knowledge on our range of brainteasers. New fans should be OK with our NEO-OTAKU questions, based on material widely available in the UK and USA; after that - well, it gets a little bit tougher, but hey, true otaku can handle the pressure, right?

NEO-OTAKU

1. How many ANGEL COP episodes are there?

2. What is Ryo-oh-ki?

3. Name Leon McNichol's partner in BUBBLEGUM CRISIS

4. What school does Keiichi Morisato attend in OH! MY GODDESS?

OTAKU

1. What is the Japanese title of NINJA SCROLL?

2. Who directed the TOUCH movies and NIGHT ON THE GALACTIC RAILROAD?

3. Which renowned anime seiyuu voiced Rhett Butler in GONE WITH THE WIND?

4. What is OTTACK BEAM?

SUPER-OTAKU

1. Which publication did the MARIONETTE GENERATION manga appear in?

2. What links American manga artist John Ott with liveaction series YAMATO TAKERU?

3. Where is the Osamu Tezuka Manga Museum?

4. Name the 3 component craft that make up tyhe DAI X ROBOT in STARFLEET

LAST MONTH'S ANSWERS
See how you got on ...

NEO-OTAKU :
1. Jack, **2**. Sol Bianca (yes, it WAS a trick question!), **3**. Hiroshi Ozora, **4**. Rory MacFarlane

OTAKU :
1. 1987, **2**. Tsunami, **3**. Cartoon/Fantasy Organisation, **4**. The type of big sword wielded by Dark Schneider is actually called a 'bastard sword' in mediaeval armouring circles

SUPER-OTAKU :
1.Les Chevaliers du Zodiaque, trans. The Knights of the Zodiac, **2**. Venus Terzo, **3**. Toshihiro Hirano & Yasuomi Umetsu, **4**. King Record (on their StarChild label)

NEO-OTAKU: 1

OTAKU:2

SUPER OTAKU:4

PEN PALS

PLEASE NOTE : It takes two or three months to put each issue together so your pen pal request may not appear for some time after you send it to us. Please be patient - all pen pal requests received are printed as soon as possible!

WAKANA NAKABAYASHI, 1069-A102 Yoshiwara, Mihama-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama 644 JAPAN : "I'm a Japanese girl of 16 year old. I hope for friends, boys or girls, from LONDON, U.K. Please write to me in English or Japanese."

SEVANNI VARTANESSIAN, 1 Gloucester Court, Headstone Drive, Harrow, Middx, HA1 4UE, England : "I'm a 15 year old fan of manga, anime, Japan and ANIME FX; I'm a big DBZ fan and card collector, like to draw manga and love watching BATTLE ANGEL ALITA, PROJECT A-KO and AKIRA. I'd like to make contact with anyone who really likes manga and all the kinds of things I've mentioned so we can write, exchange videos etc. Please write to me!

CRISTINA RUZZIER, Via Verrochio 2, 34128 Trieste, Italy : "I'm a 25 year old girl, my name is Chris, and I'd like to find many pen pals from all over the world, esp. JAPAN. My fave anime are BERU BARA (*Rose of Versailles*), RANMA 1/2, RG VEDA, ST. SEIYA, MAISON IKKOKU and many others. My hobbies are reading, writing, travelling and sport. Please write me in English, Italian or French!"

ROBERT TRANTER, 3 Whinney Ends, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbira, LA14 9DR, UK : "I am a 15 year old anime fan; my faves are GENOCYBER, AKIRA and all cyberpunk. I would prefer a Japanese penpal but anywhere else will be fine. (I can only correspond in English.) PLEASE WRITE!!!!"

PHIL VELASQUEZ, 413 Wolfe Street, Vallejo, CA 94590, USA : "Seeking a REAL mermaid or centauress as a penpal. Interests : tales, spells, sightings, mail art, photos, anime, or manga on the theme of the mermaid or centauress. If you are *the real thing* please contact me."

SCOTT ADCOCK, 36 North Park Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B23 7YD, UK : "My search for the female anime fan continues. If you are out there WRITE! I'm 17, will answer all letters."

VIOLETA DIAZ BUUGUES, c Fundicion 37-39 ESC. A ENTLO 4a, 08038 Barcelona, Spain, & **LLUISA AUMENOL MASSANA**, c/Major 575, 08759 Valliuana, Barcelona, Spain : "Hello people around the world! We are two Spanish friends. We would like to write with otakus. We love manga and anime! Write us in Spanish (our English is very bad). Write us now!"

GERD BLOCKEN, Schoutstraat 45, B-9041 Oostakker, Belgium : "I'm 20 years old; favourite anime URUSEI YATSURA, MAISON IKKOKU and VAMPIRE PRINCESS MIYU, favourite manga VIDEO GIRL AI, GUNNM. I'd like to correspond with fans from all over the world esp. Japan & the USA."

PHIL HALLIWELL, 16 Tudor Court, Shotton Colliery Co. Durham, DH6 2RE, England : "HEJSAN KARLAR! (Hi there guys!) I'm a 23-year-old guy into dafter anime & manga - RANMA, Lum, GODDESS! and so on; fave artist is Rumiko Takahashi, though I am also discovering Shirow, Toriyama & Fujishima. Other likes : video games, science fiction, American football, basketball, rock music (Roxette/ Gyllene Tider/ Lightning Seeds) and arctic cloudberry jam (!) Nothing against the rest of the world, but I'd like to hear mainly from Swedish anime nuts as I'm learning Swedish. I'll try to write to all of you. TACK SA MYCKET! (Thanks very much!)"

BETH BARCLAY, 46 Puriri Cres., Edgecumbe, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand : "I'm 13 years old and I like drawing, shopping, going to the beach, watching TV or playing on the Sega. Fave anime : DRAGONBALL, STREET FIGHTER II, SAMURAI PIZZA CATS, DEVIL HUNTER YOKO, etc etc. I can only read English but in 1996 I'll be learning Japanese. You can contact me from anywhere in the world, but especially from the USA and Japan. I will answer everyone as soon as possible. I'm trying to collect art from anime!"

AURGHA MAHMUD, 5 Telford Court, Alma Road, St. Albans, Herts., AL1 3BP, England : "Hiya, I am a 15 year old boy on a quest to find the most excellent correspondents from anywhere in the world. I enjoy anime and artwork; faves range from AKIRA and MACROSS PLUS to PATLABOR, hoobies include drawing, computers, anime & manga, music from Reggae to Soul. Unfortunately I'm only able to correspond in English, but - whether you are male or female, black or white, bald or hairy, I want *YOU* to write to *ME*! I will reply to everyone. Waiting to hear from you!

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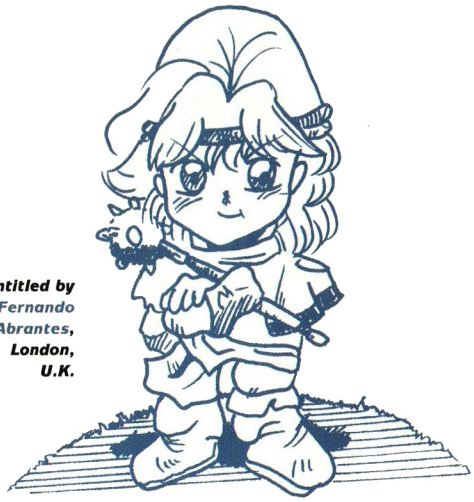
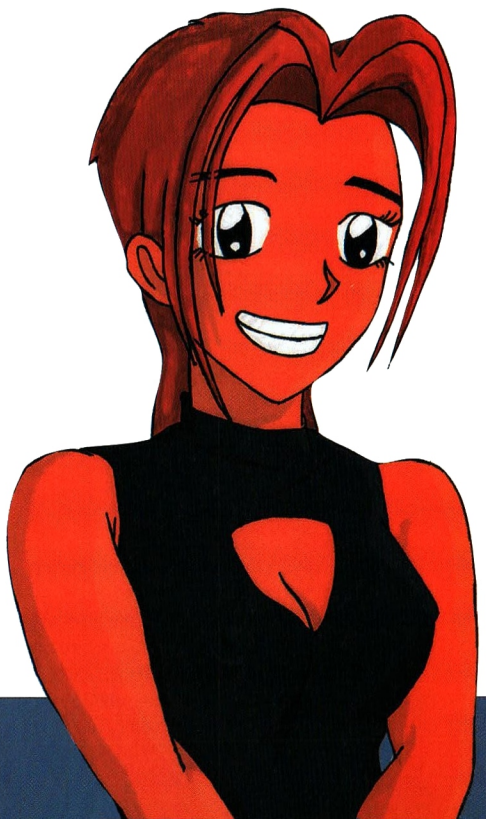


Untitled by Fernando Abrantes, London, U.K.

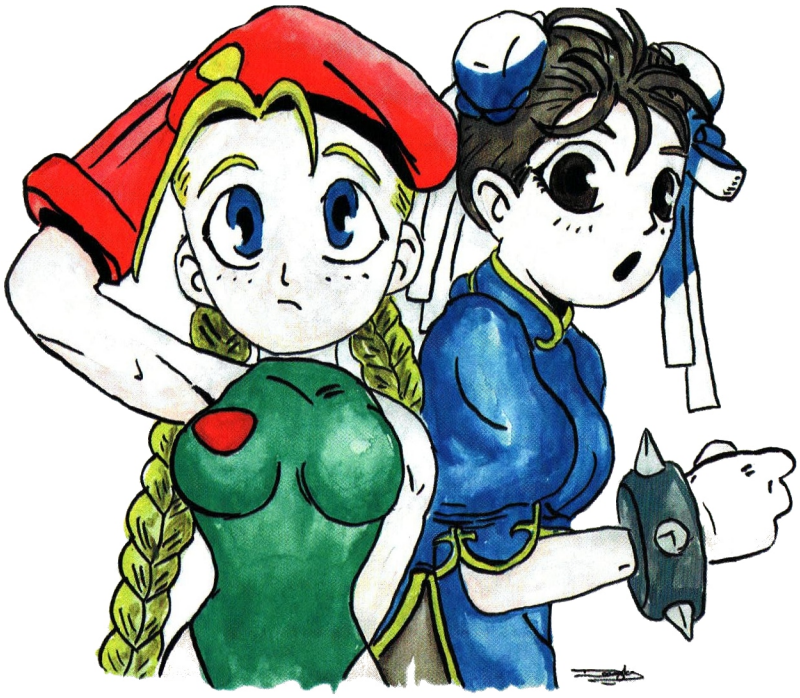
Above: "Guyver!" by Adam Meah, Sheffield,U.K.

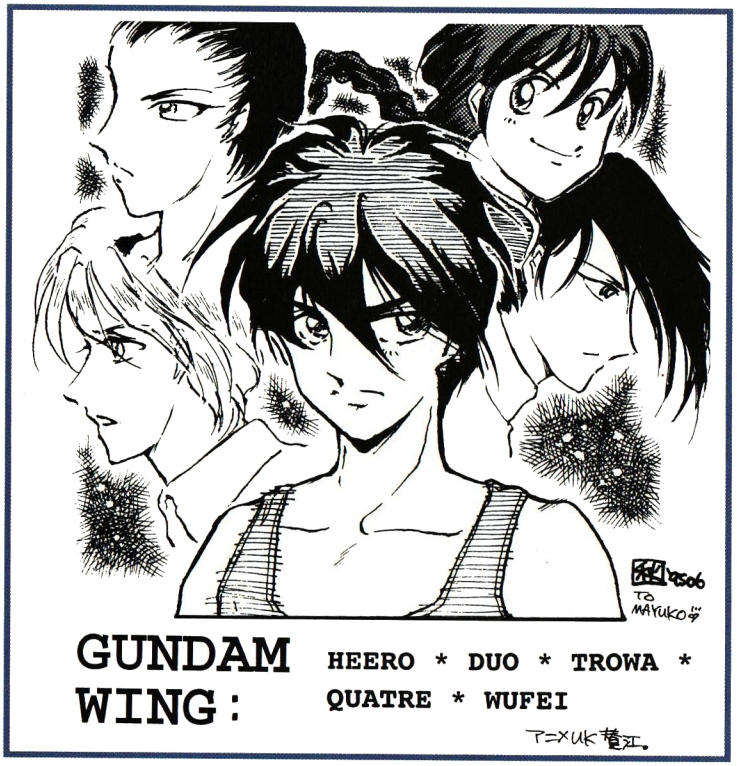
Belowt: A-KO and C-KO by Iain McClumpha, Glasgow,U.K.

Left: Untitled by David Clements, Hampshire, U.K.



Below: Cammy and Chun-Li (Streetfighter II) by Douglas Hudson, Rugby, U.K.
Right: Samurai Mafia by Shaheen mearaj, Khitan, Kuwait

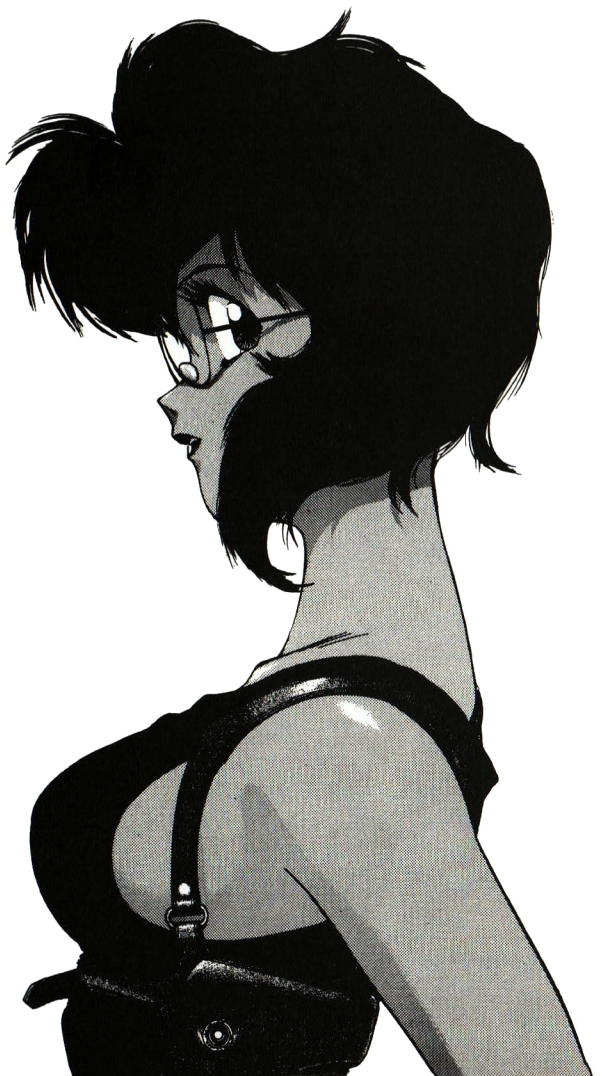




Above: Gundam Wing by Akimi Mizushita, Cedar City, U.S.A.

Right: Untitled by Andrew A'Court, Dorset, U.K.

おいしい!
* AOISHII
AH, DELICIOUS
Compiler
コンパイラ
CRUNCH!
EEP! WATER!
SLURP MELT!
BLUP!
DISSOLVE
1 PUT SUGAR AND WATER IN PAN. HEAT GENTLY UNTIL THE SUGAR MELTS.
2 BRING TO THE BOIL. ALLOW TO BOIL FOR ONE MINUTE, THEN REMOVE FROM HEAT.
3 STIR IN THE NUTS AND CHERRIES.
4 PUT HEAPED TEASPOONFULS WELL APART ON AN OILED TIN.
5 LEAVE UNTIL COLD AND SET. KEEPS WELL IN AIRTIGHT CONTAINERS.
URP!
PYOING!!
STAY FREE
INGREDIENTS
3 TABLESPOONS BROWN SUGAR
2 TABLESPOONS WATER
4 TABLESPOONS CHOPPED, MIXED NUTS (ALMONDS, PEANUTS ETC...)
1 TABLESPOON QUATERED GLACE CHERRIES.
IAIN MCCLURKIN OCT '95



BACK COVER
ANIME GALLERY

No excuses. No apologies. No waffle or blurb.
Just more of those...

GUN SMITH CATS

Left: Title page of Chapter 18 (Big Game) of the Gun Smith Cats Manga. Artwork by Kenichi Sonada. Natch!

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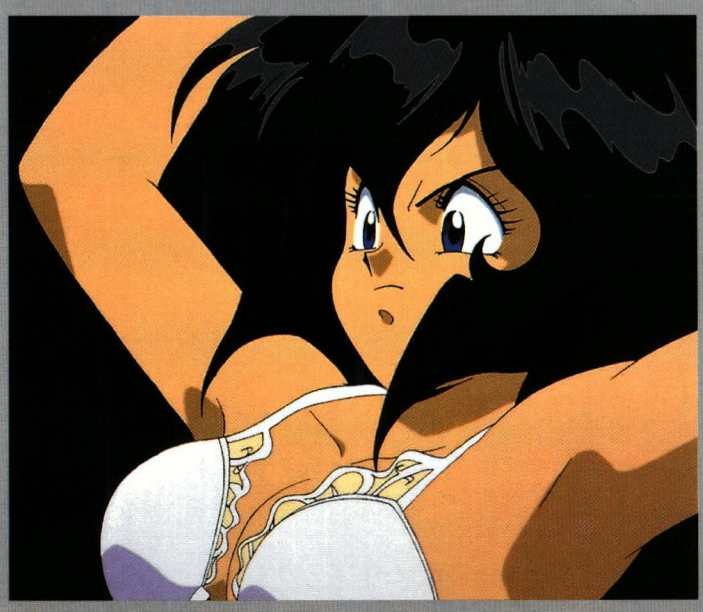

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